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The church & revolution Central America & Cuba

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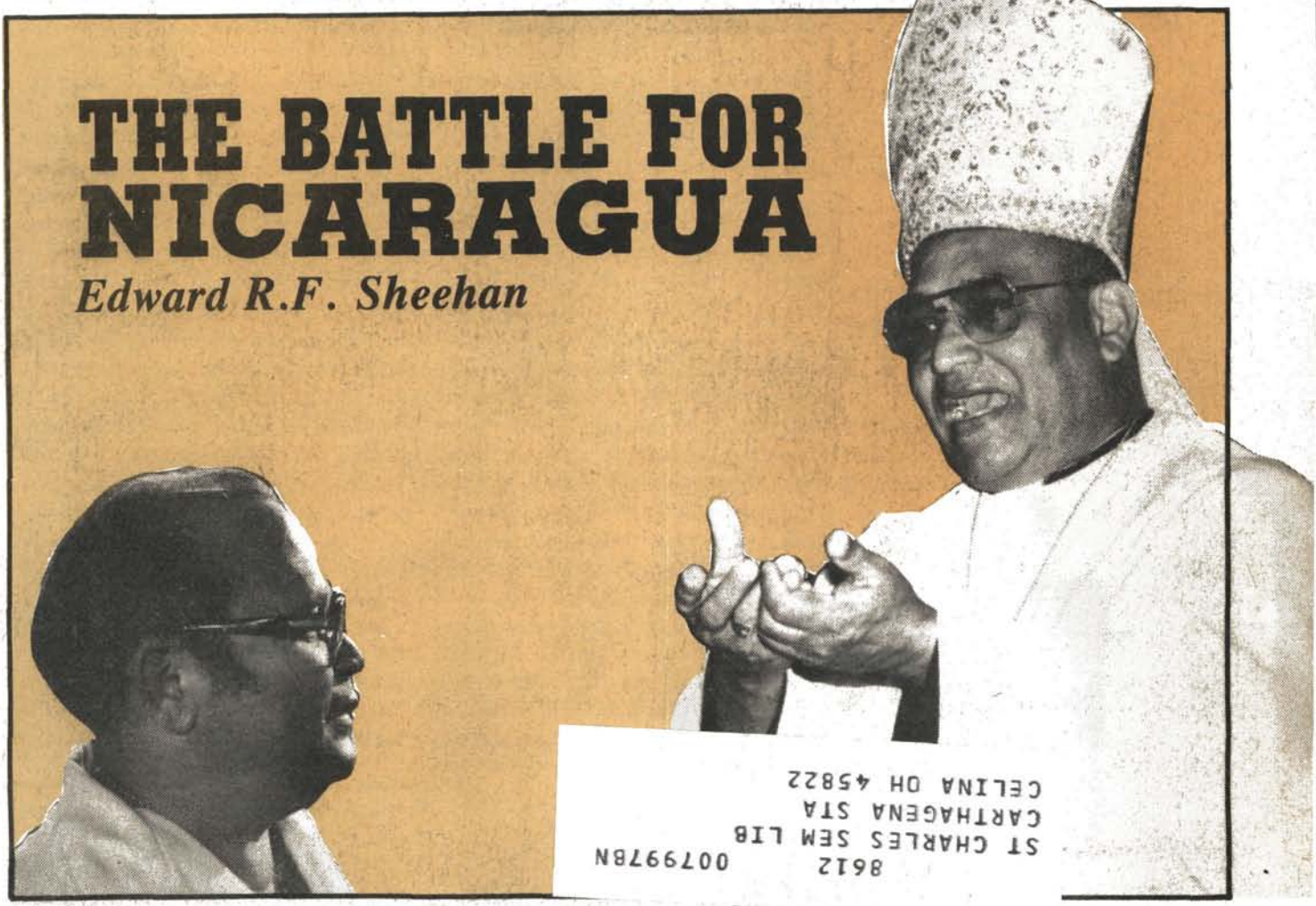
THE BATTLE FOR NICARAGUA

Edward R.F. Sheehan



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CUBA: THE CHANGING CLIMATE

HONDURAS: A TASK THAT CANNOT WAIT

COSTA RICA: WHAT CAN ARIAS DO?

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Correspondence

Noting the sources

Baton Rouge, La.

To the Editors: My article ["The Fetus and Fundamental Rights," April 11] appeared without references to other authors who were cited as sources in the original manuscript. Since these authors are entitled to acknowledgment of their work when it appears in another publication, I feel I need to point out to your readers that some of the arguments used in the article came from several excellent discussions of abortion: Mary Anne Warren's "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," in Richard Wasserstrom's *Today's Moral Problems;* Jonathon Glover's *Causing Death and Saving Lives,* Chapter 12; and Nancy Davis's "Abortion and Self-Defense," in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13:3 (1984).

JOAN C. CALLAHAN

Issue & issues

Houston, Tex.

To the Editors: I thoroughly enjoyed Ms. Flynn's piece ["Fashioning the Wanted Child," March 14] on reproductive technologies. Her reference to the Parpalaix case is interesting because this case is the first time that a (French) court has considered the matter of the frozen sperm of a dead man belonging to anyone, including a former wife.

The judgment deserves some comment. The judgment is not one which directly legitimizes a post-mortem insemination. The limits of the question were set by the court: the issue was the return of inheritable property of the deceased to the rightful heir and not her right to be inseminated by her deceased husband's sperm. The distinction is fine but important in law because in that way, the law is not giving legal sanction to the act of post-mortem insemination. This latter decision, said the court, "depends only on the conscience of the widow and her doctor who is himself under the professional rules of his profession." In this way, the court rejects the responsibility for the act of insemination. . . .

Even if the case is a particular one, it creates a jurisprudential precedent for other courts. Will other requests for post-mortem inseminations be honored? If children are born under such circumstances, what is their legal status? American jurisdictions (e.g., Texas) approve of AID (Artificial Insemination by Donor) if the husband gives his written approval. Moreover, a child conceived of a marriage, but where the father dies before its birth, is presumed legitimate. Mrs. Parpalaix would have given birth to an illegitimate child in Texas because the sperm was of her former husband; the Family Code says conception must occur "during the marriage." Most American jurisdictions would have to change their legislation. Before we do this, there are serious questions to consider.

This post-mortem insemination is or would be a direct legal encouragement for some unmarried women to voluntarily bring a child into the world without a father. Do we want the law to do that with all of the emotional and psychological trauma which this entails for many of these childen? That is exactly what will happen if American jurisdictions follow the French precedent. . . . To follow the French precedent would be a positive detriment to the whole concept of family. This is not simply the product of a wild imagination. Already in San Francisco there is the Woman's Free Clinic which sells sperm to any woman, married, unmarried, or lesbian. The French decision, if followed in the U.S., would be a profound body blow to the protection of the family owed by the state and the courts.

There are other problems associated with this whole process of post-mortem insemination. Many will see in such an effort a testimony of love and fidelity to the other spouse. On closer scrutiny, however, we should ask ourselves what kind of love could this be? There is the evident problem of a third person — the child — who enters this amalgam of love and fidelity and his/her interests are simply not considered at all. In fact, the child seems to be used as a means and not an end: The means of solidifying love and fidelity between the woman and a dead spouse. The damage done to many children in one-parent households is well documented, but oftentimes is simply not the fault of anyone. But to knowingly and willingly bring a child into such a situation is to use the child and subject him/her to potential, indeed, probable harm. Do we have the moral right to do this? As a people, should we legally permit this?

The freezing of sperm takes these germinal cells and places them outside of history, suspended between the past and an unknown future — no matter what events unfold in time. The only justification for such conception is a substituted desire of the deceased. But how truly to determine this? It is impossible to do so because time goes on to change everything, attitudes included. Can we really "freeze" the will of the donor at the time of the gift which is then frozen, placed outside the running of time and events? How is all this possible? What we are really dealing with is illusion, or what *we* think the deceased *would* have wanted at a particular time long since passed. The will to conceive a child is always dependent, morally, on the "now," on all the circumstances. By definition, post-mortem insemination destroys this mutual will and carries it back to a time (deposit of sperm) which has now completely changed. Such an act now would be morally dubious because one of the couple is not now present to assume such a grave responsibility.

All these reasons necessitate a social reflection on post-mortem insemination before courts begin to set public policy in this uncharted area. But the drawbacks to the processes are so stark that as a society

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IN MESSINESS, VERITAS

THIS ISSUE of *Commonweal* is about Central America — and its key Caribbean neighbor, Cuba. The issue does not reflect any master plan; it does not offer any exhaustive or systematic view of the region. It does, however, offer an array of contrasting visions: the hopes of moderate social democracy in Costa Rica; the depths of abject poverty in Honduras; the continuing turmoil of revolution in Nicaragua and Cuba.

This issue also offers an array of contrasting responses on the part of Christians. The report from Honduras describes the pressing need for immediate, direct responses to dehumanizing poverty and abandonment, responses that are no less essential for being relatively conventional. The brief interview with Sister Darlene Nicgorski provides a glimpse of the process by which such a response, confronted with conditions of violent oppression, led one Christian to a much more political engagement and, eventually, to defy U.S. government policy and risk imprisonment. The reports from Cuba and Nicaragua present dramatically different pictures of local churches responding to revolutionary regimes. In Cuba, church leadership is attempting a *rapprochement* with the Communist state after twenty-five years of alienation. In Nicaragua, the bishops, and especially Cardinal Obando y Bravo, are girding the church for resistance to a state that they believe is following the path of Castro's.

Rapprochement or resistance? Cooperation or combat? The conditions of both church and state are, of course, significantly different in Cuba and in Nicaragua. But there are anguishing moral questions that link both situations. Stanislas Maillard's account of the Cuban church's search for a new, more fruitful *modus vivendi* is sympathetic, but not unmindful of the obstacles to genuine freedom of religion which operate in Cuba and the skepticism that consequently lingers about the regime's real intentions. But would the initiative be cast in a more ambiguous light if one categorized the Castro regime less in terms of "socialism" and "the revolution" and more simply in terms of a Latin dictatorship with hundreds of political prisoners (at the very least; it used to be thousands, and some say it still is). *Against All Hope*, the Cuban poet Armando Valladares's account of his twenty-two-year imprisonment in Fidel Castro's mini-gulag, is about to be published (by Knopf) in the United States. Reading any of its harrowing passages compels one to ask whether the new course of the Cuban church weakens or strengthens its capacity for solidarity with those like Valladares. When does a theology of reconciliation become a theology of assimilation — or collaboration? The questions are not easy ones.

It is not, however, the report from Cuba but the report from Nicaragua that is most likely to be controversial. And for obvious reasons. The United States is sponsoring a guerrilla war against Nicaragua's government, and the White House has high-

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lighted the conflicts between Nicaragua's Catholic hierarchy and the Sandinista regime as part of the administration's campaign for *contra* funds. (The sufferings of the church in Chile, Guatemala, Duvalier's Haiti, South Korea, South Africa, and a good many other nations have never been of equal concern to the administration.) Furthermore, many Christians, rightly eager to see the church take the side of the poor rather than of traditional oligarchies, have identified their hopes with the cause of the "people's church" in Nicaragua. No doubt, then, Edward R.F. Sheehan's report will provoke disappointment — and possibly indignation. We hope it provokes something more: serious reflection among Christian activists about the challenge of determining the truth. It could be the truth about any place or issue giving rise to sharply divergent claims. In this instance, it is a question of the truth about Nicaragua.

Getting the truth about Nicaragua should not be hard. The media have not been excluded. The language is one spoken on the streets of every major U.S. city. Thousands upon thousands of visitors have passed through that embattled land in the last five years or so. Church links are particularly strong. There is, consequently, no shortage of opinion and testimony, from the right and from the left, from strangers and from friends, much of it is contradictory. And little of it inspires confidence.

Why not? One way of looking at the problem is to start with the president. Mr. Reagan has always had a light touch with the truth, but on Nicaragua he outdoes himself. It was difficult to imagine him topping his characterization of the *contras* as freedom fighters comparable to America's Founding Fathers. Then he went on TV and with elaborate computer graphics pictured the Sandinista drug dealers subverting Brazil.

Unfortunately, some opponents of the Reagan policies, including a good number of religious activists, have taken the president's distortions as a license to "balance" the picture with a set of counter-simplifications. Frankly, they have fallen short of Mr. Reagan's excesses. Still, they largely paint white where he paints black, and black where he paints white.

For Mr. Reagan and for many of his backers, the Sandinistas' Marxist ideology is everything. Nicaragua *must* be a totalitarian state. It *must* practice terror, persecute the church, subvert or invade its neighbors, provide a beachhead for the Soviets, deal in drugs, and no doubt torture kittens. Reagan's nonchalant attitude toward facts, we are convinced, springs less from any conscious attempt to deceive than from his deep conviction that such things all flow naturally, like steps in a geometry problem, from the original ideological sin.

For many of the president's religious critics, on the other hand, ideology is nothing. They simply do not confront the fact that evaluating specific deeds of the Managua regime may depend in important measure on some evaluation of the *comandantes'* overall outlook and intentions. What does the censorship of the media in Nicaragua imply? What is to be concluded from the repression of independent trade unions? From the restrictions on opposition parties? From the ban on outside meetings and processions? From the establishment of an extensive political police apparatus? Are the Sandinista block committees to be viewed as friendly neighborhood associations or as something more ominous? Are we to see these developments as merely reasonable responses to Nicaragua's besieged state, or in some cases as bureaucratic mistakes? Or should they be seen as steps by which a self-declared "vanguard party," acting on behalf of the oppressed classes, mobilizes society and destroys any independent centers of power which might reverse its rule or perpetuate a "bourgeois" set of values? Yes, Virginia, there is such a thing as Marxism-Leninism; some of the Sandinistas have made their allegiance to it quite clear; and they and their supporters openly claim the "vanguard party" role. Regimes based on such an ideology have a distinguished history — distinguished not only for denying political freedom but for failing to achieve material well-being as well. That may not be the outcome in Nicaragua, but it is a reasonable fear, and it is a fear that would not be relieved solely by an end to U.S. intervention. Nicaragua is by no means a totalitarian state, but it is led by a party which appears to suffer from a deep totalitarian drive.

Reading many reports from religious activists, one gathers that the question of Sandinista ideology and intentions can be ignored because (a) there are priests in the government; (b) the Sandinistas have promoted literacy, schooling, and health care; (c) whatever questionable things the Sandinistas have done, the *contras* or the regimes in El Salvador, Guatemala, and elsewhere have done far worse, often with U.S. support.

These points range from the trivial (since when has Holy Orders become a guarantee of political wisdom or a vaccine against authoritarianism?) to the serious. The manifestly greater outrages against freedom and dignity in places like Guatemala reveal the hypocrisy of selective White House indignation about Sandinista "totalitarianism." But the fact that things are worse elsewhere is little consolation to those who are victims of a revolution-turned-authoritarian in Nicaragua.

But what about personal experience? Undoubtedly, the thousands of Americans who have traveled to Sandinista Nicaragua — a great proportion of them under religious auspices — have had an enormous and extremely valuable role in building opposition to *contra* aid. Their first-hand testimony of Nicaraguan suffering has made the costs of war real even when American troops were not committed. They have frequently brought a spirit of sacrifice and healing and creative generosity to the open sores of warfare. At the same time, all too few of their reports are marked by any effort to hear out Nicaragua dissidents, especially those whose anti-Somoza credentials are flawless. Too few of them show an awareness of how badly visitors to other revolutionary states in the past have served the truth. Much is made of Sandinista breakthroughs in public welfare. Little is made of the economic policies which, even when Nicaragua was receiving an unprecedented sum in foreign assistance and before the *contra* depredations accelerated, left many Nicaraguans, including the destitude, convinced they were worse off than before. In *Post-Revolution Nicaraguan: State, Class, and the Dilemmas of Agrarian Policy*, (University of California Press, $17.50,

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156 pp.), Forrest D. Colburn gives a bleak report card on Sandinista economics — and reports widespread dissatisfaction. He writes of "the disenchantment of the rural poor." It has apparently escaped the hearing of too many well-intentioned travelers.

But perhaps Colburn is wrong. Perhaps Sheehan is wrong. Perhaps Americas Watch is wrong in its latest report on human rights in Nicaragua when it concludes that the abuses it cites by both Sandinistas and *contras* "cannot be justified by military necessity. The victims are the people of Nicaragua; their oppressors are the Nicaraguan government, the *contras*, and the United States. We are not in a position to say that one side's abuses are worse than another's . . . They must all be condemned." We don't want to pretend that wide open questions don't exist about Nicaragua, particularly under the guise of urging a real will to inquire. But in fact all these sources show a willingness to investigate and underline realities regardless of how they may fit preconceptions or serve in the melées of political propaganda. They teach us a lesson.

But is it a realistic lesson for those Americans struggling to convince their fellow citizens that our government's support of the *contra* war is a cruel folly? For those among us who believe that diplomatic trade-offs do exist which could protect the U.S.'s real interests and dampen the conflagration in Central America? Can they — can we? — afford to recognize the Nicaraguan reality in its full and disturbing messiness?

The answer must be yes. For in its messiness, Nicaragua is like many of the issues religious activists confront. It is like most of its Central American neighbors. It is like most of the strife-ridden world. The political engagement that so many Christians are now recognizing as part of living their faith demands a new maturity. It demands a willingness to seek and engage the truth, the whole truth.

'BELOVED OF GOD'

Hineh mah tov . . . — "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity." Pope John Paul II invoked these words of Psalm 133 when he spoke to the Jews of Rome last month in their ancient synagogue. His action in going there was as eloquent as his message. He was speaking to the world, and it was an occasion of grace.

This was the first time a Roman pontiff had entered a Jewish house of prayer since the apostolic era. Several months before, he had made remarks which seemed to diminish the strength of Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate*. Yet, he had sought out this reconciliation, and now, by the force of his personal presence, he was demonstrating before the world the respect Christians must bear Jews — a respect necessarily wedded to, and born of, repentance.

As the pope noted in his address, it was the Apostle Paul who had written the Romans that the Jews are "beloved of God, called by an irrevocable call." But what have these beloved received from our hearts, from our hands? Ostracism; persecution; revilement; extradition; near obliteration. Even in Rome, they have been made recurrently vulnerable to the caprice of Christian prejudice. How remarkable Rabbi Toaff and the Jews of Rome would welcome a pope to their temple.

Yet, they have, and the pope in turn told Catholics what must be done: recognize that Judaism is intrinsic to Christianity; undertake paths scarcely begun to "remove all forms of prejudice"; and present "the true face of Judaism . . . at every level of outlook, teaching, and communication."

If we take the pope at his word, we must acknowledge the anti-Jewishness that scars so much of Christian history; that continues to be present, despite reforms, in our liturgy; that beclouds our very Scriptures. If John Paul II's visit is to help eliminate the historic "teaching of contempt," we must be straightforward in our repentance. (Even after the pope's address, Cardinal Glemp could still remark in France that Polish anti-Semitism is but "a myth" created by enemies of his country.) Isolated gestures will not suffice.

Yahel Yiśrael el Adonai. "Let Israel hope in the Lord" (Psalm 131). Let us *all* hope in the Lord, knowing that such hope will only mature after many willing acts of change.

Church & politics

WELFARE IN MINNESOTA

A BATTLE TAKES SHAPE

AMONG the least loved, least sympathized with groups in our society are welfare mothers and, to a lesser but not insignificant degree, their children. Welfare-bashing has become such a politically and socially popular sport in recent years that few voices have been raised in the defense of welfare families. Until now.

That "now" arrived in Minnesota this spring with a state legislative proposal to cut AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) benefits by 30 percent. If recent history is any guide, it should have passed. Last year's efforts to cut back on state welfare aid in Minnesota (for those who don't qualify for federal help) succeeded.

The majority party in the Minnesota Senate is the Democratic Farm Labor party (DFL). In the House, it is the Independent Republican (IR). In February, with a state deficit looming, twenty-five-year-old IR House member Joel Carlson proposed that welfare benefits to dependent children and their families be cut by 30 percent. This proposed cut was so steep, and its likely impact so harsh, that Archbishop John Roach, on behalf of Minnesota's Catholic bishops, immediately issued a statement opposing the measure; Archbishop Roach's statement was quickly endorsed by Lutheran leaders in the state. (Lutherans and Catholics make up 60 percent of the state's population.)

To explain the impact of the proposed cuts, Minnesota's Commissioner for Human Services, Leonard Levine, wanted to hold meetings in six sites around the state. Reluctant to

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appear self-serving, Levine invited local Catholic, Lutheran, and Jewish leaders to join him at each meeting. They did.

Soon afterward, Monsignor Jerome Boxleitner, Archdiocesan Director of Catholic Charities, and Monsignor James Habiger of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, attended a meeting with five IR members. The legislators remarked that the churches were being "unknowingly used by the DFL" in the welfare controversy, that the churches should do more for the poor on their own, and that they should not "mix government with religion."

That same afternoon, Monsignor Habiger fired off an angry response. Not only were they not unknowing dupes, he said, but, "This activity [speaking up for the poor] antedated the Democratic party [and] the Republican party . . . not just by years but by centuries. If the DFL agenda echoes the church's concern, you should know that we in the church were there first." Accounts of the meeting later appeared under headlines which read: "Five legislators tell church to mind its own business."

Protest continued to arise across the state. Two rallies of women and children took place at the Capitol rotunda, one of which drew 1200 people; major editorials appeared in the local press; United Way broke a long-held tradition of political neutrality to oppose the cuts; the Catholic bishops' Commission on Social Justice analysis of the cuts and "Call to Action" appeared on the front page of the *Catholic Bulletin*; and a press conference of former AFDC recipients (including Secretary of State Joan Growe and Appeals Court Judge Suzanne Sedgwick) was held. Unhappiness over the issue was so widespread that by March 19 the legislature dissolved, leaving the state without a budget until Governor Rudy Perpich convened a special session of the legislature. DFL members on a budget conference committee refused to consider any cuts in AFDC benefits, while IR members were equally insistent on *some* reduction, however small. The DFL won its point, and no cuts were made in General Assistance in 1986.

The differences between 1985, when General Assistance was cut, and 1986, when not cutting AFDC became *the* issue for gubernatorial candidates as well as legislators, are instructive. While it's true that mothers with children tend to enjoy greater public support than other people who get General Assistance, this year's proposal was so harsh that Republicans in the state concede it made them look foolish. But, more important, according to Sam Horowitz of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, was the role of the religious community's effort in setting the tone: "They may not like welfare, but it's wrong to gang up on women and kids. The IR members stressed welfare, and we [the JRLC] stressed what the cuts would do to women and children. We changed the terms of the debate. When some moderate IR members said, 'You always suggest a high number, knowing you'll settle for less after cutting the deals, that's just politics,' we said, 'This isn't a time for politics as usual; AFDC is above politics; you can't play politics with children's lives.' " Catholics in particular, Horowitz feels, helped establish the sense that this was a time to speak out.

Monsignor Boxleitner agrees. This year, he says "we had our act together," a situation he believes was helped by the strong response of Archbishop Roach, and by the U.S. bishops' pastoral on the economy which, "sensitized a lot of people to this and other justice issues." As a result, people in the pews "basically supported" the church's vocal opposition to the welfare cuts. The members of Catholic Charities' Board, many of whom are Republican, voted unanimously to write to the legislators on this issue. However, Boxleitner points out, "We've only won the battle, not the war. . . . It's going to be tough. But we're talking about justice, about a moral issue. We ought to be there."

What changed things for welfare families in Minnesota this spring is due in some measure to a role being assumed by church leaders in matters of social justice. May their tribe increase.

NANCY AMIDEI

(Nancy Amidei frequently reports on poverty, hunger, and human services issues in these pages.)

Of several minds: *David R. Carlin, Jr.*

A SECOND COMING

MOYNIHAN & THE FAMILY

DANIEL Patrick Moynihan is one of those rare prophets without honor who has managed to live long enough to see the honor at first denied him granted at last.

When his notorious "Moynihan Report" on the black American family, written for the Johnson administration, appeared in 1965, both the report and its author were denounced — "trashed" might be a better word for it. Since he was a sociologist of some reputation, not a streetcorner orator, it occurred to Moynihan that to explain the plight of black Americans purely and simply in terms of white racism might be less than perfectly illuminating, especially after that explanation had been repeated for the ten-thousandth time, as it had been by 1965. Important though white racism had been and still was as the ultimate source of black disabilities and black-white inequalities, still, Moynihan believed, this ultimate source worked through secondary causes. Among the most important of these secondary causes was the relative weakness of a disproportionate number of black American families. Large and increasing numbers of poor black children were growing up in households where the father was absent, a circumstance which, even if racism were to disappear overnight, would leave these children at a serious competitive disad-

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vantage when they entered the adult world. Left alone, the situation would grow even worse. The key to reversing it was to see to it that black adult males could get jobs paying enough to permit them to support a family, thus raising their esteem in the eyes both of themselves and their wives, thereby giving family stability a fighting chance.

"Blaming the victim" was the indictment leveled against Moynihan by the streetcorner orators and their political, journalistic, and academic fellow-travelers. But two decades later the sociologist-turned-senator has been vindicated by the disastrous realization of his prophecy. Even as middle-class blacks were increasing in numbers and entering the mainstream of American life, the situation of lower-class blacks has been growing more and more desperate. And at the heart of this deterioration has been the virtual disappearance among them of the two-parent nuclear family. For a few years now, for instance, more than 50 percent of all black births in the U.S. have occurred out of wedlock, the great bulk of them involving mothers and fathers of lower-class status.

Not surprisingly, then, Moynihan's latest book, *Family and Nation* [Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 207 pp., $12.95] has been given a far friendlier reception than his report of twenty-one years ago. When a prophet has a track record like Moynihan's, people are reluctant to withhold honor from him at his second coming.

This time the senior senator from New York focuses on the American family generally, not simply on poor black families. He argues (what is obvious) that families have an enormous educative impact on growing children, and (what should be obvious but hasn't been for most people) that government, therefore, has a compelling interest in promoting strong and effective families.

My hunch is that Moynihan's words will fall on fertile political soil. Over the next few years, I predict, a hundred proposals to improve the American family through government action will bloom. Some will be genuinely new ideas, others old notions tricked out in the suddenly stylish "pro-family" look. Politically speaking, Democrats should profit from this new fashion more than Republicans, largely because Democrats have been suffering from something of an anti-family image in recent years, and anything that can turn that image around is bound to be helpful. The Moynihan approach is attractive, especially to liberals, because — unlike the conservative pro-family position, which tends to see government and family as locked in a zero-sum contest (as government grows, family diminishes, and vice versa) — it sees a very positive role for governmental action.

All this, I think, is very good. The new Moynihan book, taken in combination with last year's *Habits of the Heart* by Robert Bellah et al., represents the most encouraging intellectual change of pace to hit American politics in quite some time. Both books remind us of something only a very strange philosophy could have made us forget: that as a matter of social-psychological fact, human beings are not mere isolated individuals, à la Robinson Crusoe or Rousseau's pristine savage, but social beings to the very core; and that to act on assumptions that ignore these facts of life, as Americans at the political and especially the personal level have tended to do in recent years, is to invite disaster.

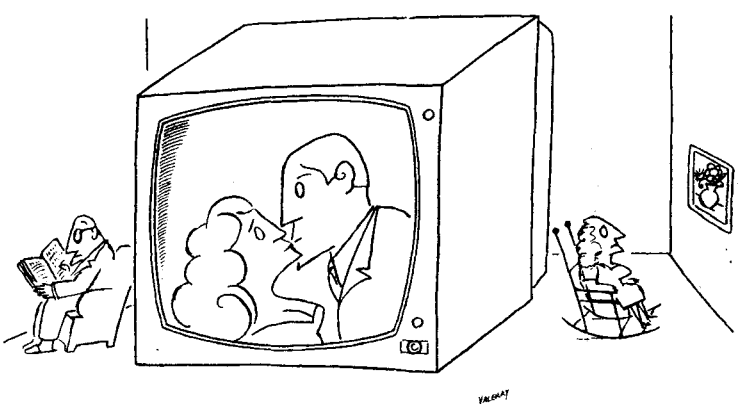
But before we out-Moynihan Moynihan, getting carried away with enthusiasm for saving the American family, we should keep in mind that in this matter, as in most other matters, there is only so much government can do. If the American family has been weakened in the past few decades, as I believe it has, this is only in small part due to failures of government policy. In far larger part it is due to changes in American culture. Unlike, say, the Soviet Union, where the rulers of a highly centralized political system also pull the strings of the cultural system, in the U.S. the leaders of our relatively decentralized political system have scant impact on the cultural system. Such are the glories and the limitations of a liberal society.

Consider, for example, the rising divorce rate, the sexual revolution, the soaring incidents of out-of-wedlock births, the greatly increased numbers of households with both spouses employed outside the home, the changing definition of sex roles. These are the more conspicuous but by no means the only factors tending to weaken the contemporary American family. Yet for the most part they are not the product, not even the unintentional by-products, of government policy; and even less are they reversible through government action.

Lest this word of caution sound like a counsel of despair, however, let me note that the family has been "in decline" ever since the breakup of kinship-based societies; that is, at least since the emergence of the ancient city-state. Anything that has spent that long a time dying is not likely to expire anytime soon.

If the history of the family is a history of decline, it is also a history of repeated revivals, as this remarkably durable institution continually adopts new forms in adapting to new circumstances. Moynihan's call for a national family policy, inadequate though that surely is as a program for the salvation of the family, may well be a vital first step toward the next revival of the most fragile yet most ancient of human communities. At all events, it is a step we can hardly afford to omit.

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.



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CHURCH, CARDINAL, & COMANDANTES

The battle for Nicaragua

EDWARD R. F. SHEEHAN

THE greatest battle being waged in Nicaragua today is not the Sandinista army's war against *contras* — whom, they have, for now at least, largely defeated — but the conflict between the Marxist government of Managua and the church of Rome. I recently completed a visit of five weeks throughout much of Nicaragua, where I met many of the central actors in this drama. I visited scores of cathedrals, churches, schools, and private homes; talked in Spanish with ordinary clergy and the poorest of the faithful; and arrived at conclusions that may not correspond with conventional liberal wisdom.

All writers have their biases, so let me be honest and admit mine. Ideologically I am neither of the left nor right, but (I like to think) only of the Christian humanist center. Nevertheless, I arrived in Central America with a deep distaste for the Reagan administration's military policy toward Nicaragua, and an equally deep suspicion that the *contras* were a reactionary right-wing force.

After nearly a week with the *contra* army in Honduras on Nicaragua's northern border, granting that perhaps 40 percent of their commanders are ex-Somocistas, I came to see them more as actors, bearing a legitimate grievance, in a terrible national tragedy and civil war. The *contra* troops, an army of simple peasants, many of them children who have barely reached puberty, have no ideology but their fervent Catholicism. I still strongly oppose the Reagan policy of giving them weapons, since it would intensify the fratricide in Nicaragua and the grotesque arms race in Central America. I still oppose the Reagan policy generally, but once inside Nicaragua I found the Sandinistas equally repugnant.

For example, the independent Permanent Commission for Human Rights in Managua estimates at least 5,500 political prisoners in Nicaragua, many of them psychologically and even physically tortured — kept in tiny dark cells, in filthy conditions, deprived of food and sleep for days at a time, often beaten or more horribly abused — charges supported by the International League for Human Rights and my own conversations with several former prisoners. I found the Sandinista government an ugly, repressive military regime, run at the top by incompetent *comandantes* who have alienated most of their people, ruined the economy, and are growing more despotic.

It is only (and necessarily) in such a context that I can discuss the crisis of church and state. This said, and before I revert to analysis, let the actors speak for themselves.

First, Miguel Cardinal Obando y Bravo, archbishop of Managua and head of the Nicaraguan church. The cardinal and his senior aides — Monseñor Bosco Vivas, auxiliary bishop of Managua, and Monseñor Bismark Carballo, vicar of communications — recite a long and saddening list of increasing harassment of the church by the Sandinista government. Not least of the more recent harassments have been: the detention, imprisonment, and interrogation of more than 150 Catholic officials and priests; the drafting of seminarians of two dioceses into military service; the expulsion from Nicaragua of foreign priests considered hostile to the Sandinistas; the seizure by armed state security forces of the Social Pastoral Office of the archdiocese of Managua; and the permanent closure of *Iglesia*, the church newspaper, and *Radio Católica*.

For more than six years, the official church has been forbidden access to television, and with the suspension of *Radio Católica*, "it's obvious that the state intends to forbid our message of the Gospel and to monopolize all means of public communication," the cardinal told me. "I am forbidden to conduct processions or celebrate Mass in the open air. The state cannot tolerate a popular religious leader. We're like a bunch of matches — they're not breaking us all together, but in pieces, one by one." But such obstructions, I objected, at least did not constitute violent persecution. "It's a *form* of persecution," the cardinal replied, "and the pressures will get worse."

Bishop Vivas and Monseñor Carballo were even more ve-

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hement. "We've tried to protect our people from the violence of the government," Bishop Vivas said, "— our young people from an ideology and military service for a system they don't believe in, from the spies and *turbas* [mobs] of a government on the way to totalitarianism. The *turbas*? They won't rest until they turn the entire church into another arm of the government." The religious *comunidades de base* [base communities]? "They're all arms of the government — another way to mobilize the youth and women into service for the state." The so-called popular church? "Everything in the popular church is to advance and proclaim the propaganda of the government, to twist the words and Gospel of Christ into slogans for the Sandinistas, serving their aims of violence, hate, and class warfare."

Monseñor Carballo added, "You see, we're unfaithful to Lenin — and they're Marxists. . . . Juridically the popular church remains in communion with Rome, but in practice it's in schism. . . . Some American bishops — in San Antonio and New Mexico for example — support the Sandinistas. Some laymen in the American episcopal conference interfere with our communications with the American bishops." He was quite stern about that.

CONTRAST THE comments of the cardinal and his aides with those of Padre César Jerez, a Guatemalan Jesuit, Rector of the University of Central America (UCA) in Managua, and one of the most sophisticated pro-Sandinistas in the country. "Bishop Vivas loses oxygen" when he talks of the popular church, Father Jerez told me. "This dispute is not doctrinal but political. . . . The cardinal fears that Nicaragua will become another Cuba," but the fear is unfounded. "The church is losing its privileges in Nicaragua, and for me the great question is whether the church will decide to evangelize [under current conditions] or to confront negatively the new Nicaragua. It would best not choose the path of confrontation. . . . We all respect the Holy Father, but the pope's analysis of Nicaragua is bad. He thinks the Sandinistas are dangerous for the church, and must be confronted by a strong leader at the top. . . . I talked with the Holy Father three times. I don't want a fourth meeting. He's *suspicious*. He receives all his information on Nicaragua from Cardinal Obando, but Nicaragua is not Poland and Obando is not Wyszynski. The Nicaraguan church has no apostolic plan to evangelize the new Nicaragua."

Now listen to Padre Jerez's close friend Fernando Cardenal, Nicaragua's Minister of Education, expelled from the Society of Jesus on instructions from Pope John Paul II, but who continues (he told me) to live in a Jesuit community and to celebrate Mass: "An international campaign of calumnies is being waged against Nicaragua, claiming persecution of priests and that our education is Marxist. *Show* me — page by page — *where* it's Marxist. . . . It's true that in our universities Marxism is studied, but *not* in our secondary schools. . . . Marxist analysis forms part of social studies and our revolution, but in the life of Nicaragua there is no contradiction between the revolution and Christianity. True, you can't mix the atheism of Marx with belief in Christ, but the essence of our revolution is love. There is atheism in the adoration of the dollar. . . . My expulsion from the Jesuits was amicable, and I don't resent the pope. I recognize his supreme authority in matters of doctrine, and accept all dogmas of the church.

"The dispute in Nicaragua today [between the official and the popular church] is not over doctrine or dogma — it's *political*. I have no problem of conscience over this political dispute. I can't abandon my people — that would give me a problem of conscience. . . . There is no schism in the Nicaraguan church. . . . We are one church."

Now Fernando's brother, Padre Ernesto Cardenal, Minister of Culture, a poet who gained a fame of sorts when the Supreme Pontiff wagged his finger at him at Managua airport in 1983, and (so it was reported) told him to get out of the government or out of the priesthood: "Ours was the first revolution in history made with the massive participation of Christians," Padre Ernesto told me. "It set an example for future revolutions where the population is Christian. The Christian role can be historic in the making of these new revolutions — not against the church but with the church.

"However, the pope and the bishops don't want us precisely because we are revolutionaries. . . . In some aspects John Paul II's social doctrines are progressive, but I can't say he's a revolutionary, and I'd like him to be. There is no contradiction between Marx and Christ, because you can be a Marxist and not an atheist. I declare myself a Christian Marxist. St. Thomas Aquinas integrated the philosophy of Aristotle into his own philosophy — and Aristotle was a pagan. Thus we can practice the philosophy of Marx without being atheist. . . . Yes, I'm still a priest, but I'm forbidden by Rome to celebrate the sacraments."

Next, Padre Uriel Molina, the Sandinista Franciscan who directs the *Centro Ecumenico Antonio Valdivieso* in Managua and is pastor of Santa Maria de los Angeles — abounding in spectacular murals combining Christian symbols with revolutionary triumphalism — the most famous of the "popular" churches in Nicaragua. Father Molina played a major part during the Somoza dictatorship in the intellectual formation of such Sandinista leaders as the late Carlos Fonseca and Tomás Borge, the present (and much feared) Minister of the Interior. His magazine *Amanecer* ("Dawn") preaches not only liberation theology, but is so copious and expensively produced, combining theology with such ardent apologetics for the Sandinistas, it is commonly considered to be financed by the government. Trained in Rome, he is perhaps the most eloquent priest in Nicaragua. His Sunday evening sermons resound in shouting testaments to "*la lucha revolucionaria*" [the revolutionary struggle] and denunciations of Reagan policy. His liturgy is orthodox, though the rock orchestra that provides the music for his Mass makes for an extraordinary spectacle of what I can only call ecclesiastical theater.

However, Father Molina told me, "It's false to say that I'm a Marxist. I'm a student of the church, of Scripture, Hebrew, Greek, and theological problems. I *am* a revolutionary." The New Testament contains an explicit condemnation of capitalism, he continued, reading from 1 Timothy 6:10 —

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"For the love of money is the root of all evil." Furthermore, "St. Francis of Assisi rejected private property, and he was revolutionary. He was more than the founder of an order, but of a grand movement that revolted against feudalism and the authoritarianism of the pope."

I objected that Innocent III eventually recognized the Franciscan order, and that in the interim St. Francis never threatened schism from the church. Nor do we, Padre Molina replied: "During all of my priesthood, I never raised problems of doctrine, or of schism from the bishops. I have no problem with the fundamental doctrines, [for example] that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But my Roman education, John XXIII, my experience in the third world, and the Medellín declaration — the church's preferential option for the poor — have been the principal determinants of my life. I reject [Bishop Vivas's accusation] that the *comunidades de base* are an arm of the state. The same false accusation has been made against the *comunidades* in other countries. I believe that the church must be the agent of social change. Liberation theology confronts the scandal of social misery. The [official] church talks against totalitarianism, but gives no sign of dialogue with us, its own members. . . . If there is sin in the church, it is this absence of dialogue."

Padre Molina is officially subordinate to Cardinal Obando, his bishop, to the Franciscan provincial in Guatemala, and to the superior general of the Franciscans in Rome. According to Monseñor Carballo, "Uriel Molina no longer has sacerdotal faculties in the archdiocese of Managua. His Mass is valid but illicit." Padre Molina disputes this, though he admits that he has been asked to leave Nicaragua by a delegate of the Franciscan superior general. He has refused, and is awaiting further instructions from his Franciscan superiors. He hinted that, no matter what the instructions, he will remain in his parish even in defiance of the cardinal, which would place him in ecclesiastical disobedience if not in schism.

Finally, from the pro-Sandinista clergy, the voice of Padre Agustín Toranzo, a Spanish Jesuit in the northern town of Ocotal, who remains in good standing with his bishop in the Diocese of Estelí. "The pope — and the Nicaraguan bishops — are committing sin by not condemning the *contras*," Padre Toranzo told me, "including the *contra* massacres, and by not speaking in favor of patriotic military service against the *contras* atrocities. I think that the mission of the church is to support the [Sandinista] government in its struggle against aggression. We should support Christ against violence. . . . I agree with Gandhi that 'Christians don't believe in Christ.' The masses must be leavened, and in some cases Marxists are needed to leaven the masses for social justice. Marxists who feed the poor are more Christian than the Christians who by their silence are in league with the *contras* and the United States."

Somewhere in the middle of this acrimonious ecclesiastical quarrel are those bishops in Nicaragua who are more conciliatory to the Sandinistas than the cardinal, and in whose dioceses — Matagalpa and Estelí, for example — the harassment of the official church is less severe.

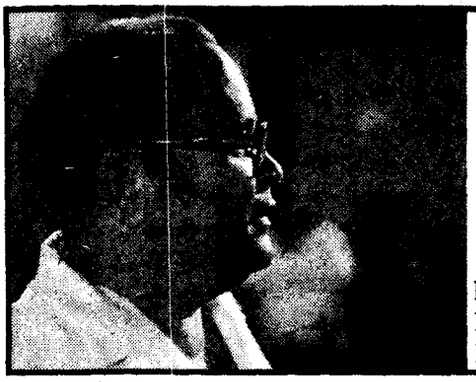
Monseñor Carlos Santi, a native Italian, a gracious Franciscan of about sixty who prefers his brown habit to his purple robes, is bishop of Matagalpa, a cattle and coffee-growing province in the center of the country. "We are not persecuted by the government, but we suffer from restrictions," he told me. "We are allowed no Catholic press, and some of our buildings were occupied by the army until 1984, but we continue to engage in dialogue. We are fortunate in that unlike other dioceses — where all charity and social work has been taken over by the state — we do retain our orphanages and our work for the rural sick with aid from West Germany and the United States. One of our great problems is the government's indoctrination of the young, all that Marxism against Christianity. We exert all our influence to counter this.

"Except for one or two priests, we have no 'popular church' in Matagalpa. *gracias a Dios*. In fact, the popular church attracts less than 10 to 15 percent of Nicaraguans at most. They *prefer* the traditional church. César Jerez is a good priest and theologian, but he is always completely pro-Sandinista — like Uriel Molina. The state sees that they get all the resources — money, travel, and access to the media. Padre Molina is completely controlled by the state."

The Nicaraguan hierarchy is not monolithic. Yet even Estelí, in the northwest of Nicaragua where young Monseñor Rubén López Ardón is bishop, and despite his reputation as the most conciliatory of the bishops to the Sandinistas, the church is confined almost completely to evangelization — its charitable and social apostolate now taken over by the state. A number of Monseñor López's priests are pro-Sandinista, yet several priests who espouse liberation theology — such as Padre Julio López, a Colombian national of the parish of Calvario — state flatly that the popular church has practically no appeal. "It's totally politicized and at the service of the state," says Father López. "What the right has done with the church in other Catholic countries, the left is trying to do here."

A young nun who teaches in one of Estelí's Catholic academies for girls told me that — except for a course in religion confined to two hours per week — the curriculum is wholly dictated by the state, with much emphasis on Marxist analysis of the history of the world, of Nicaragua, and of the Nicaraguan revolution. "And yet, our students stay faithful to the church," she mused.

"The people are with the bishops and the pope," added



Father Miguel D'Escoto

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Padre Wésther López, another priest of Estelí. Even Padre Toranzo, the Sandinista Jesuit of Ocotal, admitted that "the people prefer the traditional faith."

Moreover, Minister of Education Padre Fernando Cardenal dissembled (to say the least) when he told me that Marxism is not taught in Nicaraguan secondary schools. I have before me several textbooks running from the first grade of primary school through the senior grade of secondary school. The primary-school texts, all printed (with an acknowledgment) by the government of East Germany, do not specifically mention Marxism, but they abound in Sandinista indoctrination, not only in the history of Nicaragua but in basic alphabetization texts and even in mathematics. In León, the nation's second city, a high-school girl showed me one of her basic textbooks, *Fundamentos de filosofía marxista-leninista*, a Spanish text printed in Moscow by the "Editorial Progreso" in 1982, densely propagating the unexpurgated Soviet line on dialectical and historical materialism, class warfare, and the rest.

This is hardly to suggest that the study of Marxism in any school system is invalid (to the contrary), only to offer further evidence (and Nicaraguan priests and parents complain of this constantly) that the nation's schools, from primary through university, are drenched with Sandinista-Marxist indoctrination much to the exclusion of other philosophies.

As for the popular church's *comunidades de base*, even UCA's Padre César Jerez admitted to me that, "In the beginning, when the revolution came to power, the natural leaders . . . were the *celebradóres* [Delegates of the Word]. Consequently, you didn't know if you were talking to a religious leader or a political leader. In some cases that happened. The *comunidades* should *not* be organs of the state. They need free elections. The problem does exist." Other priests and many laymen go as far as Bishop Vivas and say that the *comunidades* are completely politicized to serve the propaganda of the Sandinistas.

MY OWN CONCLUSION is that despite the doctrinal and liturgical orthodoxy of the popular church — though Bishop Vivas questioned even that, asking "Who knows what they do in these *comunidades*? Consecrate *tortillas* or Coca-Cola?" — the popular church is irremediably removed from the discipline of the bishops. Witness the recent statements of Padre Miguel D'Escoto, the Sandinista Foreign Minister and a suspended Maryknoll priest. After completing a 200-mile "Way of the Cross" in support of Managua's current social policies and its struggle against the *contras*, D'Escoto described Cardinal Obando as "an accomplice in the assassination of our people"; called on him to "repent his sins"; and repeatedly labeled him a "traitor." One report from a D'Escoto sympathizer — but which I cannot verify — said that the Sandinista foreign minister spoke of an "excommunication" of Cardinal Obando by the popular church. Such a deep division between the official and popular church may indeed be due to the intransigence of Cardinal Obando, but their respective positions seem so irreconcilable I wonder if more flexibility from Obando would have made much difference. Father D'Escoto and the Cardenal brothers, by many accounts, wield no real power; real power is in the hands of the *comandantes*, and it is their obvious plan to tame the official church.

I do not suggest that the cardinal's methods in this crisis are above reproach. Though he speaks constantly of national dialogue and reconciliation of all Nicaraguans, there may be at least a grain of truth in the standard Sandinista charge that he sympathizes with the *contras* and hopes for their eventual victory. The suspicion, I understand, of some American bishops that this may be so has complicated the cardinal's relations even with some U.S. bishops who are known for their conservatism. The gap is suggested by the fact that Cardinal Obando's senior aides consider at least one advisor on Latin American affairs to the U.S. Catholic Conference as pro-Sandinista if not an outright enemy.

Certainly Cardinal Obando compromised himself when, following his elevation to the Sacred College last spring, and before returning to Managua, he celebrated a public Mass in Miami attended by *contra* leaders. Today, he is very defensive about that. "I didn't invite them," he told me. "I'm against all violence. I have nothing to do with the *contras*."

"That's nonsense," said a neutral Western diplomat in Managua who has studied Obando's methods. "He knew exactly what he was doing in Miami." "True," I observed, "the cardinal is very shrewd." "He may be shrewd," the diplomat riposted, "but he's not very sophisticated."

The debate on Obando's methods commonly comes down to a single question: Is he a Glemp, or a Mindszenty? Would he serve the church's interest better by avoiding confrontation, by marking time, by making small concessions when he must, by bargaining like a Glemp with a hostile government? Or is he convinced that the Mindszenty method is the only way — outright confrontation and defiance? Glemp, of course, has survived as did Wyszynski before him; Mindszenty failed, and in his failure seemed to harm the Hungarian church. Or so the debate goes.

My own feeling is that, however imperfect his tactics, Cardinal Obando essentially has no choice but to battle the Sandinistas with every weapon at his command, not least his own immense popularity among Nicaraguans. (I have no doubt that he and John Paul II are the most popular men in Nicaragua.) He faces a regime determined to control every sector of public life. (Witness the censorship of *La Prensa*, the surviving opposition newspaper, and its recent reduction to six pages, the suspension of civil liberties last October, and the increasing repression of independent trade unions and political parties.) The Sandinistas' repression is aimed at the church most of all; they seem determined not only to divide the church, but to reduce the bishops to impotence. Obando recognizes this, and he is resisting in the only way he knows.

Moreover, I am not persuaded by the chronic argument (even from non-Sandinistas) that John Paul II misunderstands Latin America, and that he thinks Nicaragua is another Poland. On the contrary, I suspect that — whatever his insensitivity in some matters — basically he understands all too well. He understands that an intense power struggle is going on, that the

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Sandinistas may indeed intend to wrest control of the Nicaraguan church from Rome's hands. Thus he is exerting all of his moral force — through Cardinal Obando — to prevent that from happening.

Essentially, it seems to me, the pope is right. His plea that the church should be pastoral, devoted to the poor and social justice while staying out of politics, makes particular sense in Nicaragua. Moreover, the pontiff, like the church he heads, has a keen historical memory. He knows that in battling schisms Rome can rely on two millennia of experience and usually prevail, however patient it must be and however long the battle lasts.

I would also argue that the vast number of Nicaragua's Catholics feel likewise. How else explain the pictures of Miguel Obando and John Paul II in so many hovels of the poor, or the multitudes who flock to the traditional church not for sermons on liberation theology but for the consolation of the sacraments, the rosary, the chanted litany to the Virgin that helps them to endure their misery? Whatever the merits of liberation theology, and there are many, in Nicaragua at least it is a *frisson* for the intellectuals; most of the poor either don't understand it, don't want it, or have never heard of it.

Go to León, the city of churches, with perhaps the largest cathedral in Central America, and, it seems at nearly every corner, another baroque temple from the seventeenth or eighteenth century, deteriorating from neglect and lack of money but all of them evoking a rich ancient culture. Enter the church of the Subtiava, one of the oldest in the Western hemisphere, and hear the men, women, and children chanting out the responses of the rosary. "*Santa Maria, Madre de Dios, ruega por nosotros pecadores, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte.*" When I hear them singing, mournfully to the music of organ and trumpets, as though imploring heaven to take pity on their beleaguered church as well as on their own suffering, I feel with them, there — not in Uriel Molina's Sandinista shrine — the palpable presence of Christ.

CATHOLICS UNDER CASTRO

Cuba: the changing climate

STANISLAS MAILLARD

THE VAULTS of the austere cathedral of Havana reverberated with the thundering applause which greeted the procession of delegates to the first National Encuentro of the Cuban Church (NECC). The meeting was coming to a close on Sunday, February 23, with a high Mass celebrated by Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, special envoy of the pope. He was surrounded by all of Cuba's bishops and specially invited foreign guests. As the solemn procession wound its way through the joyful crowd, where more than one person was giving way to tears, first one, then two, then ten, then hundreds of handkerchiefs and scarves were raised and waved in sign of welcome.

Three thousand Catholics were gathered in the cathedral, come at their own expense from different parts of the country, in order to take part in this historic day for the Cuban church. The law bans religious ceremonies outside church walls, but here was a sign of the government's goodwill: permission to use the square in front of the cathedral so the procession might enter from the main door rather than the sacristy and — a greater concession — authorization to broadcast the Mass out of doors by means of powerful loudspeakers.

Skeptics, maintaining that the merely curious constituted more than half the crowd, had to yield to the contradictory evidence: everyone joined fervently in the chants, the prayers, and finally in the reception of Communion.

Profoundly united around its priests and bishops, fond of colorful ritual, incense, and children's choirs, this church is nevertheless far from triumphalist. Archbishop Jaime Ortega of Havana declared, "We are aware of the disparity between our own negligibility and the magnitude of the objectives and hopes with which the Holy Spirit inspires us. We are a small flock, unable to claim impressive numbers; we cannot and do not wish to speak in terms of sociology or power . . . we lay claim to no other originality than to be totally faithful to the novelty of the Gospel." And Bishop Adolfo Rodriguez of Camaguey, president of the Cuban bishops' council, evoked what he called "the miracle of empty hands."

This is not false modesty or diplomatic words masking an endeavor to set up a counter-power in Cuban society. The Cuban Catholic church, for reasons stemming from its recent

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past as well as its origins, is a church poor in human and material means. It seeks, the bishops declared, only to "follow Christ and accomplish his mission in the world." That, in reality, is a vast program which assumes that the institutional Cuban church can take its place in social and cultural life and that its faithful are acknowledged as full-fledged citizens.

Since the Cuban regime defined itself as Marxist, Leninist, and atheist in 1961, and with the wounds which ensued, the Catholic and Protestant churches have suffered a hemorrhaging of faithful and pastors. In 1954, according to a survey by Catholic university students, 17 percent of the population regularly practiced their Christian faith (all denominations included). By 1976, the figure was less than 2 percent. And over 70 percent of those practicing were fifty years of age or older.

This erosion cannot, however, be attributed solely to the twenty-six years of Marxist rule. That point was made several times by Msgr. Carlos Emmanuel de Cespedes, secretary-general of the Cuban bishops' council, in his daily press briefings: "The truth," he said, "is that Cuban society has never been thoroughly evangelized. Entire segments of the population have been evangelized only in a superficial fashion. The blacks, for example; so, too, the rural population."

Not only was the church never deeply rooted in the life of ordinary Cubans; during the nineteenth century, its attachment to the Spanish crown and its conservative outlook also clashed with the liberal and nationalist aspirations of a significant part of the bourgeoisie. Catholics were largely absent from the struggle against Batista's dictatorship, and conflicts between the church and Castro's regime were quick to escalate, especially after the elevation of the Communist party to power and the attempted invasion at the Bay of Pigs. Hundreds of priests and thousands of sisters were either expelled from Cuba in the early sixties or emigrated in fear of the regime.

Today, Msgr. de Cespedes believes that a minimum number of practicing Catholics is 100,000 or 1 percent of the Cuban population. Yet attachment to the church goes beyond this tiny hard core of the faithful who openly live their faith. One bit of evidence is not without a touch of black humor: Msgr. de Cespedes notes that, "At the main Havana cemetery, where most Cubans here are buried, there is a small chapel with a priest who is at the disposition of families who would like to have a Mass for their deceased. In fact more than half of these people have a Christian burial."

In contrast to the sparse attendance of some fifty rather elderly people at each of the Sunday Masses at the Havana cathedral in the working-class section of the city, there would be 1,200 faithful — many of them young — in attendance at the parish of Carmel in a middle-class quarter.

Vocations are at the lowest level: thirty-six at the two major seminaries in Havana and Santiago as against sixty in 1975. This small number of vocations does not surprise one professor at the San Carlos Seminary in Havana. He emphasizes the fact that to enter the seminary "supposes a deeply considered personal decision for which the formation they have received does not prepare them. Add to that the social pressure: a young man returning to secular life after a stay in the seminary could anticipate difficulty regaining a place at work or in the university."

Fearful for their careers or for the future of their children, many parents have long since ceased all religious practice; they have given up religious weddings, having their children baptized, or sending them to catechism classes. Or sometimes, weddings and baptisms take place discreetly in another city or another quarter. "To be fair," said Msgr. de Cespedes, "we must recognize that among these people there are Christians who have turned from the church because of its attitude toward the revolution. Now that the church is more open, that kind of thing is dwindling and people, whether the fearful or the militant, are drawn to return to the churches." The extent of this development, however, is hardly spectacular.

If for several years there has no longer been an official policy of discrimination against Christians, discrimination does continue, and Fidel Castro, in his recent book-length interview with Frei Betto, acknowledges the mutual mistrust. On the one hand zealous functionaries continue to apply past regulations; there has been no official withdrawal, for example, of the application form asking the beliefs of a candidate for the university. On the other hand, many young people do not even try to seek justice when they believe that they are victims

THE FIRST National Encuentro of the Cuban Church (NECC) took place in Havana from February 17 to 23. This meeting was meant to evaluate the current situation of the church in Cuba and project the general outline of a possible church of the future.

The near unanimity revealed by the votes on different sections of the 180-page working document stemmed from the fact that the document, like the delegates themselves, arose from diocesan assemblies which had taken place throughout 1985, and before that, starting in 1981, by a vast movement of reflection and consultation all the way to the parish level.

Each diocese was represented in proportion to its number of practicing believers. In addition to elected delegates, about 20 percent of the delegates were named by the bishops, the conference of religious orders, and the seminary directors. Of 181 delegates, there were 115 men and 66 women; 110 lay people, 22 religious women, 2 brothers, and 47 priests, including the bishops.

Although the delegates ranged in age between seventeen and seventy-two years, they were generally middle-aged (between thirty and fifty). The lay people were professionals for the most part — twenty-six engineers, thirty-six technicians, and fifteen scientists — and involved in parish or diocesan activities ranging from the administration of communities to catechesis and liturgical direction. The extremely low representation of workers (five delegates) and peasants (one delegate) was a keen depiction of the sociological reality of the Catholic church in Cuba. S.M.

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of discrimination, or of their own accord they decide not to apply for courses in history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, surgery, journalism, diplomacy, and political science. That explains the large number of Christians (Protestants encounter the same difficulties) who are engineers, technicians, or office employees.

Catholic personalities who are known and appreciated by the regime for their commitment to the revolution, but who openly affirm their faith, can only be guest professors at the University of Havana, not established professors. This shows the degree to which mistrust persists, even if there are notable exceptions.

About those facts, the delegates at the national *encuentro* who agreed to speak with journalists were hardly expansive — when they simply did not evade the question. "We are not here to harp on our miseries or draw up a list of demands," one of them explained. Archbishop Ortega insisted that "the conference had to stay clear of two snares: either emphasizing the faults of others or exhaustively dwelling on our own faults. It would then have been very difficult for us to reach an understanding and we are weary of division."

The Cuban Catholic church has therefore decided to turn over the page of the dark years and to seize every occasion for dialogue without expecting any spectacular changes. "For three or four years," said Archbishop Ortega, "there has been a current, a consistent tendency on the government's part to ease the tensions, to do away with discriminations. We transmit the cases brought to us to the government's Office of Religious Affairs. There are fewer and fewer; nearly all have been resolved."

MUCH has been said in the Cuban church about a new way of life for the body of the church, something along the line and spirit of Puebla, but with a difference. When Cuba's bishops and priests returned from Puebla in 1979 they brought a set of documents which analyzed a situation quite different from their own. Thus when Bishop Fernando Azcarate launched the idea of a vast self-reflection on the part of the Cuban church in 1980, it dealt with the difficulties of how to inculcate the faith and proclaim the Gospel in a socialist society marked by twenty-plus years of Marxist-Leninist atheism. That is the central question for the Cuban church today. The answers have now been clearly laid out, at least in theory: we must dialogue and take part in the building of that socialist society without losing our identity as Christians.

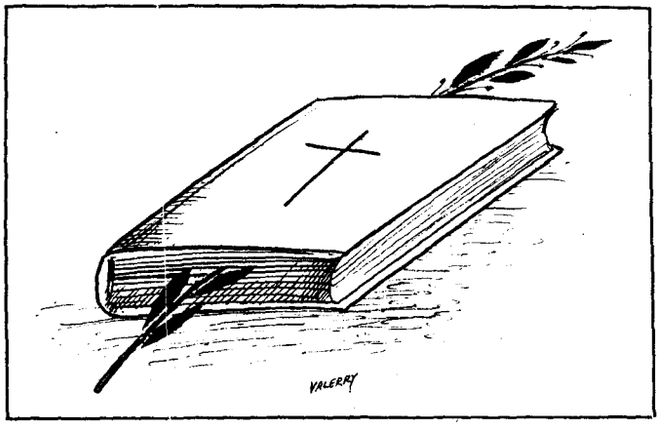
The dialogue takes place at two levels. For one thing it's a question of getting to know each other and meeting together to deal with a number of daily matters. It is not only a question of co-existing but of learning to live and act together. When the Cuban bishops invite their faithful to dialogue with the Communists, it is first of all, they say, a "dialogue on living." That amounts, according to Father René David, to "abandoning doctrinaire positions and attitudes of refusal and condemnation, adopting instead a pastoral stance of respect for the other."

This shift in the church's direction, set in motion more than a decade ago by the bishops, clearly has not been wholly accepted by certain members of the faithful and the clergy, made uneasy by the change. It remains to be seen how the faithful will respond to the *encuentro*'s exhortation to take part as Christians in the building up of society in order to be "the leaven of a civilization of love." (To be sure, among the lay people, priests, and religious of all ages sent by their dioceses to the NECC, a good many could give evidence not only of their social commitment, but their revolutionary commitment as well.) Judging from contacts made in different parishes outside the *encuentro* itself, virtual unanimity of the delegates on these questions is not completely shared by the people in the pews. While expressing happiness at the convening of the NECC, the general run of parishioners are skeptical about any real evolution in the attitude of the Communists toward them. Young or old, they seem more worried about the unhindered practice of their religion than eager to take part in the building up of socialism.

In spite of the presence of forty-three Cuban journalists accredited to follow the proceedings of the NECC, the national press was very quiet about the event. It did emphasize the meetings between Communist officials and churchmen, notably the reception at the airport of Cardinal Pironio and Archbishop Carlos Amigo Vellejo of Seville by Felipe Cameado, head of the Office of Religious Affairs of the Communist party. Cameado also met Archbishop Patricio Flores of San Antonio, Texas, representing the North American Bishops' Conference, and Archbishop Marcos MacGrath of Panama, as well as Msgr. Felipe Estevez, a Cuban who is rector of the regional seminary of Miami. Cardinal Pironio was received by Fidel Castro, who put an official plane at his disposal so that the nuncio could visit the various dioceses on the island.

In his report to the Third Communist Congress in February, Fidel Castro devoted only three phrases to Christians. Two emphasized the progressive character of certain Christian democratic parties in Latin America and noted that socialism could not be built without them. The third saluted liberation theology.

A number of observers remarked that Castro's three phrases said nothing to the Christians of Cuba — where there is no Christian Democratic party or liberation theology — and that they do not commit him to anything. But others pointed out a



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small but significant omission in his speech: the proverbial reference to Engels's judgment on religion in *The Anti-Duhring*.

It is not necessary, however, to look at the declarations of the government under a magnifying glass to find out if there is any change in the air. Even the most skeptical recognize this. An indicator of this development was the publication last October of the book, *Fidel and Religion*. It was a smash hit, with more than a million copies sold and the third edition about to go out of stock. The book is sold chiefly on the black market.

On reading this book many Christians' hopes have been rekindled. Communist militants have begun to regard Christians differently and have even sought dialogue in order to find out more. For instance, Rigoberto Gomez, the president of the lay commission of the Havana diocese, but also sub-technical director of a business enterprise and an engineer, reports: "I have been pressed with questions by my colleagues at work. I talked for four, and then for seven hours with my director, who has read Castro's book three times." Gomez goes on to say, "We have come to agree on the necessity of valuing what unites us: social action for a better society, mutual respect for political and religious views, the desire to bring about the unity of the people. We remain in disagreement about the existence of God and the principle of armed struggle as the only road to national liberation." Testimony of this kind shows that Cuban society is drawn toward a real dialogue.

The momentum created by the publication of *Fidel and Religion* was reinforced by the final phase of the church's preparatory sessions for the NECC and the meeting itself.

In the course of the debates at the National Encuentro of the Cuban Church (NECC), there were a number of references to a 1981 article by Professor René David of San Carlos Seminary in Havana, entitled "For a Theology and a Pastoral Policy of Reconciliation." Father David's article has had a profound effect on the newfound openness in the Cuban church, as can be seen in the following quotations:

"LIBERATION THEOLOGY takes off from a situation of injustice, of dehumanizing socio-economic imbalance, of institutionalized violence on the part of the politically and economically powerful. . . . The situation in Cuba is quite different. The revolution has abolished private ownership of the means of production and even of distribution. In seeking better social equality it offers free education and health care in a social situation marked by simplicity and in an economy marked by a certain austerity in which Christians, consistent with their faith, can develop the virtue of evangelical poverty.

"It is evident that a dictatorship of the proletariat does not claim to offer all the desirable conditions of freedom nor to have achieved the difficult balance between equality and liberty necessary for a more authentic fraternity. But what, above all, saddens a Christian who knows that Christ is essentially the Reconciler is the historical situation of confrontation, misunderstanding, and condemnation on both sides which is prolonged in mutual mistrust, harassment against the faith on the one part, and on the other a lack of enthusiasm for participating in the building of a society which proclaims to believers their eventual disappearance as believers . . . and reduces them to second-class citizens. It is also saddening to realize that it's the people who have to pay the cost of this reciprocal mistrust.

"From the example God has given us, the Christian must take the initiative in the process of reconciliation . . . which does not mean acting as if there were no problems or concealing real obstacles behind a facile none-too-sincere smile. . . . Essential differences do remain.

"But we must get over the fear that paralyzes us. Is a fear of Communism which kills off any thought of reconciliation truly Christian? And we might also ask our Communist brothers if fear of dialogue with Christians is a revolutionary attitude.

"To put Christianity and Communism in opposition in general terms is to condemn oneself never to see the values in Communism as well as its faults and to close the door to reconciliation — when in reality the Christian faith is not and should not be a contradiction of Communism but of its 'atheistic faith' and its consequences for human rights and the achievement of a society which does not discriminate; while Communism should not be a contradiction of the Christian faith but of its distortions and their socio-political effects. . . .

"The task is therefore not so much to speak of incompatibilities as to be present among men. . . . If the faith is catholic, should it not be concerned with enabling Communists to become reconciled with God? And is that possible without an effort by that same church to reconcile Communists to itself or rather that the church become reconciled with them . . .?

"If Communists do not make atheism a dogma, a pseudo-religion, we might suppose that the church could be reconciled with them on the basis of Communism's objective: that the reconciliation of man with man through the achievement of a classless society is in harmony with the spiritual demands of the faith. . . . That would permit a Christian to be politically Communist and a Communist to be religiously Christian. But reconciliation does not signify identity; the faith is the faith and a political ideology is a political ideology. . . . An irreversible process of reconciliation is possible on the condition that the Communists lay aside their militant atheism and the Christians do not hold back but apply themselves to the realization of a classless society. . . ." S.M.

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Today, it is possible for a Catholic to speak of taking an active part is socialist society without being considered naive, an opportunist, or a traitor. To be sure, the text of the NECC clearly says in referring to the Cuban Marxist state: "to participate is not to identify oneself with it." The text also speaks of the necessity of discovering a synthesis "between Christian humanism and Marxist anthropology . . .," a notion requiring either a large dose of optimism or a rather daring realism.

In this climate of détente, last November representatives of the Ecumenical Council of Churches sent Fidel Castro a document, "Hypothesis on the Relations Between the Churches and the State." The Protestant churches suggested in this text that perhaps the time had come to devise a law which would grant Christians a full-fledged social existence, means of carrying out their mission such as access to the media, a revision of textbooks eliminating flagrant anti-religious references, and the end of the questions on beliefs for university applicants.

"In this century," said Pastor Adolfo Ham, president of the Ecumenical Council, "you are not asked what race you belong to; then why is there a question as to your religion?" To win institutional changes guaranteeing the status of Christians and their churches will probably take time. The Cuban National Assembly is to meet in June (there are two sessions a year, each for three days), and the commission on laws has not yet been apprised of any measures on the subject.

While they wait, the churches are profiting from the new breeze blowing over the country: there is evidence of a return to religious practice and of personal conversions. In one Havana parish there have been scarcely three or four catechumens a year for the past fifteen years. Today there are twenty-eight. Young, for the most part, they were to receive their First Communion, or be baptized, this Easter.

This climate, favorable for the churches, actually helps the whole Cuban nation which is profoundly divided. "If everyone lays aside his or her mistrust, bitterness, and even hatred in order to dialogue," said one priest who has been in the country for twenty years, "then we can envisage at last a reconciliation of the Cuban nation, a better fate for everyone."

DEMOCRATIC LEGACY IN COSTA RICA

What can Arias deliver?

J.S. FUERST

IN FEBRUARY — for the tenth time since 1948 — Costa Rica elected a president without incident. He is Oscar Arias Sanchez of the National Liberation Party (PLN). At forty-four years of age, he holds a Ph.D. in political economy from Essex University, a Masters from the London School of Economics, and a bachelors from Boston College. (I have interviewed Arias three times in the last five years, most recently during his campaign for the presidency.) Arias was Minister of Economic Planning under several presidents, the general secretary of the PLN for a number of years, and a staunch believer in many of the policies of JFK's Alliance for Progress. Like his predecessor, Luis Alberto Monge, he has been a long-term Costa Rican representative to the Socialist International.

With Central America being a focal point of U.S. foreign policy, and with Costa Rica being our vaunted model, the election of a strong, able liberal from the social democratic camp is a most significant event.

In the area of general economic policy, Arias made it clear to me he stands for greater equalization of income by increasing real wages, by raising taxes on the middle and upper classes, by enhancing education, health, and housing services, and by intensifying the program of cooperatives — both consumer and producer. (A full-blown cooperative movement has existed in Costa Rica for many years. In the last five years it has grown from 10 to 15 percent of the GNP.) Yet as he made these points in an interview, Arias emphasized that, "We don't want to promise more than we can deliver. Our greatest problem is over-expectation."

His program for cooperatives is a long-time, long-term interest. In 1981 he told me that although Costa Rica had a number of state-owned enterprises in sugar, aluminum, cotton, transport, shipping, etc., coordinated by a public corporation (CODESA), neither he nor any of the PLN leaders were altogether happy with these enterprises. They were too paternalistic; there was great waste; and most continued to lose money. The PLN has wanted to transfer the bulk of them, since 1981, to cooperative sponsorship. This transfer to cooperatives was not accomplished, however, even through the last years of Monge's incumbency, largely because the AID program of the U.S., which provides a $200 million subsidy annually, bitterly opposes any significant transfer of state-owned operations to cooperatives, insisting instead on subsidizing only transfers to private ownership. AID officials,

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with whom I discussed this, say that cooperatives in Costa Rica are too "liberal," too "politicized," and have not a "sufficient business orientation." In short, as one AID employee told me, these cooperatives don't "know what the bottom line is."

In commenting on AID's intransigence, Arias told me, "We have got to convince the U.S. that a more extensive use of cooperatives is most important for Costa Rica. It is the way to bring grass-roots democracy to people, offering a method of developing our agriculture and rural areas with more equalization of income. And it is more efficient than state-owned enterprises." For Arias, cooperatives offer a third way between purely private ownership and state enterprise; American refusal to assist anything but its own model of private ownership is, he believes, a reliable way to alienate third world countries like Costa Rica. In promoting the cooperative movement and equalization of income, Arias indicated that whereas the middle and upper classes have business and professional pressure groups fighting for their interests, the government has to fight for the workers and farmers.

One of the economic programs Arias believes of greatest importance is the development of new jobs in rural areas through innovations in industry and agriculture. A significant indication of his administration's attitude toward cooperatives was the recent appointment of Rudolfo Navas Alvarado, present national leader of the cooperative movement, as minister of agriculture. Despite his own interest in rural development, Arias does not believe in the transfer of vacant land to farmers, one of the strong demands of the PVP, the arm of the Communist party in Costa Rica, nor is his view that of the trickle-down economists. He maintains that if Costa Rica is to help its farmers and workers it must be through programs specifically directed to them, such as raising wages and keeping up farm prices.

Another key element in Arias's program is the decentralization of decision-making on local issues. Several years ago he introduced legislation which called for such decentralization. "It's a risky business," he told me. "But so is life. We have to give people a chance to set their own priorities and run their own programs — although we must still help them through technicians and professional advice." He accompanies this push for grass-roots participation with support for far greater capital investment outside the Central Meseta plain and the capital of San Jose.

Another area that concerns Arias is education. "What Costa Rica needs as much as anything is improvement of its education," he says. "We cannot use the U.S. as a guide. . . . We have to have technical vocational schools. We have to combine them with the cooperative movement for a kind of work study program. Perhaps most of all we need a substantial improvement in the quality of teachers. We must raise salaries, offer more scholarships for foreign study, and attract better teachers, more with Ph.D.s."

Arias wants to develop more "cultural interfacing" with other European and North American democracies. He echoes the philosophy of Jose Figueres Ferrer, three-time president and father of modern-day Costa Rica: "What are tractors without violins?"

Characteristic of Arias's broad philosophy is his emphasis on experimentation and innovation. But, he notes, "The most important virtue is patience. We all want to see things happen immediately, certainly in our administration; but many things just aren't possible to achieve quickly."

In the area of foreign policy, notably Nicaragua, Arias is less than clear. In 1981 he told me that while he was uneasy about the Nicaraguan regime, Nicaragua was an important trading partner and he saw no reason to change this stance. He added that Nicaragua had every right to take whatever position

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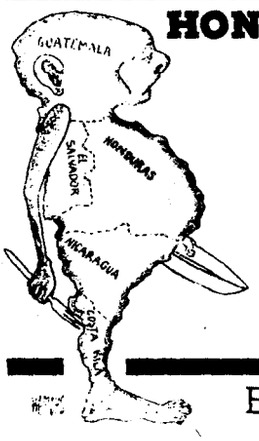
it wished in its domestic policies, and that Costa Rica would do nothing about it. Under no circumstances would he favor providing aid and comfort to the Somocistas, or providing a base from which *contra* forces might operate against Nicaragua.

In 1983 he somewhat amended his views. He was more uneasy with Nicaragua, believing its government had come under the strong influence of Cuba, and that Nicaragua had become more intolerant of civil rights at home. Furthermore, he believed that the PVP was now under the influence of the Sandinistas, and that it was attempting to stimulate domestic unrest in Costa Rica. It fomented strikes that had apparently caused a withdrawal of investments in the banana industry and had increased unemployment. It demanded not just a sharp modification of all Latin American foreign debt structures, as Figueres has long proposed, but a flat abrogation of Costa Rica's foreign debt — far more than Arias thinks the nation can expect.

When I talked to him in October 1985 in the middle of the presidential campaign, Arias skirted the Nicaraguan issue. Publicly he handled it gingerly, nevertheless coming to be labeled the "peace" candidate. His past orientation as well as current statements left no doubt that he would steer clear of right-wing pressure for an agressively anti-Sandinista foreign policy. After his election in February, the *New York Times* reported that Costa Rica and Nicaragua had agreed to normalize relations. Nicaragua apologized for any unintentional acts against Costa Rica, while Costa Rica agreed to send a new ambassador to Managua, and to continue a position of neutrality. Arias continues to support a negotiated settlement of the Central American conflict. It seems likely, in spite of the cautious position toward Nicaragua which Arias has taken in recent years, that Costa Rica will reassert a more friendly stance toward Nicaragua during his presidency; provided of course, the Reagan administration does not threaten Costa Rica, which has the highest per-capita foreign indebtedness in the world ($1,800 per person), with the withdrawal of AID funds and other support.

HONDURAS: FACING THE NEXT GENERATION



A task that cannot wait

EDMUND S. NADOLNY

IN FEBRUARY I hired a television film crew, through the cooperation of the local Honduran CBS office, and with Sister Patricia Gould, R.S.M. — who was interested in producing a television program on the poverty of Honduran children — started a journey throughout the country. We were told that there are 40 million orphans in Latin America; 100,000 of them reside in Honduras. I initiated this journey hoping to make an impact, through our film, on others; I ended it overwhelmed by the impact it had made on me. That impact began with Mr. Raphael Tercera, bureau chief of the CBS office in the capital, Tegucigalpa, who generously offered to arrange for our permission from the Junta National to travel with cameras to certain areas in Honduras. Tercera told me about the great numbers of "economic orphans," children from families with one or both parents who could not afford to keep them at home. It wasn't difficult to find them.

Outside our hotel, children were roaming around looking for someone to care for them for a day. I stopped one boy to ask if he would shine my shoes. He agreed. He told me that he had to leave his immediate family, who lives three hours from the city, to stay with his grandmother. If he did not shine shoes, his grandmother would have no income. "Where does she live?" I asked.

"Near the soccer stadium," he replied.

That night our camera crew went to look for his grandmother's home. We found her in a shack half way up a hill toward the stadium. We approached her shack through a city dump. She was cooking on an open fire. Her home was no larger than our average closet. We asked her if we could film it; she looked frightened but consented. What escaped filming, however, was the question I asked myself: What keeps her going, with absolutely nothing to rely on except her grandson's shoe-shine donations?

Walking through the dump back to the car, we stumbled upon two children searching for anything that might prove of value. Close by was their mother — a look of hopelessness caught the camera lens. These children had a family, but they were orphans — economic orphans.

As we got into our truck to continue our journey, we saw four children waiting on a corner begging. One boy was lame, and one girl had a broken arm. Our cameraman, a Canadian working in Honduras, explained that some abandoned children are picked up for prostitution, pornography, and begging.

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They are snatched and never found again. Sometimes profiteering adults will take a pretty girl and break a limb so that she will look more pathetic when they put her on the street to beg. If she does not return with a certain amount of money, she will be severely punished. So these children will resort to anything to find money. Otherwise, they may be lost permanently.

Under the bridge in the heart of the city is a river whose banks are peopled with peasants who moved there from the countryside — where there is 30 percent unemployment — hoping to find work. Earlier, I had seen a group of little boys, aged five to twelve, lying under the bridge to protect themselves from the elements. Some had a box for a home. Most were lying a few feet from the traffic. We now took our camera to the peasant shacks — no larger than a small carport and housing families of ten. There was no electricity, no sanitation facilities, and water was drawn from a contaminated well filled from the river.

Naked and dirty children came to us. Mothers were trying to wash the little clothing they did have at the river. These children had a parent or parents, but what was obvious was the parents had been excluded from the country's poor economy. Eventually, will these children, too, be abandoned? Will they be stolen by pornographers for business? Will they die early because of an untreated sickness or malnutrition? Will they end up on the streets begging? The need for an orphanage was beginning to strike home.

THE NEXT day we traveled to Casa Temporal, a temporary shelter. In many ways I wish I had never gone there. The shelter was filled with children from a few months old to ten-years-old. They lived at this temporary shelter because their mothers had brought them to the hospital and abandoned them. Sixty percent of the mothers were single parents; the fathers had abandoned the mothers. Again, these children had parents, but were economic orphans. While we were at the shelter, the children were having dinner. The shelter's budget, like the Junta National budget for social purposes I learned, had been cut drastically. Two toddlers were eating together. As soon as I sat down they came over to me and put their arms around me. Were they looking for their father? The teacher's aid appeared to be their substitute mother. After dinner they were brought to the crib room. I noticed that some children were coupled in cribs. "We have more children than cribs," the social worker said.

"What do you need most?" I asked.

"Do you see those two children? One is two-years-old and has heart trouble and the other child has a bad case of asthma. At night we have to rush them to the hospital and we have no transportation." Sister Patricia lifted up Juanita, whose heart was so weak.

Later, the director of the shelter explained that there was also a tremendous need for mothers' milk. Although some mothers come to the shelter to give their milk, the problem is storage. Unrefrigerated mothers' milk lasts twelve hours while refrigerated milk lasts up to fifteen days. My need to do something overcame me. We got into our truck, went shopping, and came back with a refrigerator. Some things just can't wait, and mothers' milk is one of those things.

When we were completing our filming at the shelter, I noticed a sign in Spanish: "To serve is to live; not to serve is to die." My final question to the directress was, "Can U.S. citizens adopt some of these children?" "Yes," she replied "but it takes a lot of red tape." The directress also gave me a list of needs and said, "My government is too poor to help us. Would you at least help with the cribs?"

That afternoon, we drove out of the city to a *barrio*, a settlement of over 32,000 people living along a large mountain. As we began to ascend the hill, I looked for signs of water. I could see none. We drove up a bumpy dirt road filled with holes and rocks. We finally reached the top of the winding road only to find a worse road that almost broke our axles (and our necks). On the mountain top was a Catholic church, seminary, convent, and rectory. All around the church property were rows on rows of temporary homes of people who had come to find a better world.

My first question to the sisters and priests was, "What do you do for water?" The priest had clothes on that obviously had not been washed for a long time. Children kept coming to the rectory and convent looking for some kind of help, so the sisters and priests did not answer the question.

Instead, as we talked to each person separately, a more frustrating picture of needs emerged. Sister Elizabeth Ann Schildmeye, O.S.F., was a nurse whose niece was helping her attend to the health needs of many of the sick among the 32,000 inhabitants. Sister Elizabeth Ann needs more classrooms. She has seventy children in each class and many on the waiting list. "How many more classrooms do you need?" I asked.

"At least ten more."

"Where are you going to get the teachers?"

"There are many unemployed teachers who are not hired by the government because there isn't enough money in the education budget. All we need is financial aid. We'll do the rest," she emphasized with a determined fist. "We don't want our children to become uneducated orphans."

Our camera crew went over to the rectory, a house half the size of my own parish garage in Connecticut. Ronald G. Roll O.F.M. Conv., had just been assigned there.

"What are your plans?" I asked.

"To pray," he answered. "To pray that we can find water for our people. The government doesn't have the money to send pipes and pumps up the mountain for these people. The rainy season is short. The trucks filled with water that come here often can't make the mountain. Pray for government funds. . . ."

As we came down the mountain I felt I was descending Mount Tabor. I made a mental note about praying for the water pipes and doing something for the education of these children.

The following day, Fr. Richard Frechette and Fr. William Wasson invited us to their temporary orphanage. Father Wasson has operated an orphanage for over thirty years in Cuer-

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TESTAMENT IN TUCSON

LAWS AGAINST WELCOME

SISTER Darlene Nicgorski is on trial in Tucson, Arizona, for six felony counts arising from her work with Central American refugees seeking political asylum here. She faces a maximum sentence of eighty years. Nicgorski, forty-two, grew up in Wisconsin, attended Alverno College, and joined the School Sisters of St. Francis, a Milwaukee-based religious order. She taught school, received a masters degree in early childhood education, and set up a day-care center in Mississippi before going to Central America. Sister Darlene describes her transition from Milwaukee schoolteacher to indicted felon:

"I went to Guatemala in 1980 to help set up a child-care program. The sisters thought an early childhood program . . . wouldn't be looked on as suspect by the government. I was in Guatemala only six months when our pastor was shot and killed. [Government military forces] have killed over thirty-two priests in Guatemala and El Salvador.

"The people in the village came and warned us that we would be next if we didn't leave. It was called 'subversive' to do what our sisters were doing. The sisters in the next town had hand grenades thrown in their convent because they trained lay leaders, *delegados de la palabra*. That's what we were doing.

"There was a lot of moving around and a lot of tension. Eventually, we [sisters] were given a sanctuary in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico. I lived for about nine months in Chiapas. While there, we became involved with the refugee camps. When we left in 1982, more than 45,000 Guatemalans had fled over the border to Mexico. We took some testimony about why they were forced to leave. It was really then that I began to put together what had happened.

"Everything happened so fast. I really didn't have a political and economic analysis of the country [Guatemala]. You can read the story in the book called *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Doubleday, 1983) about what happened in 1954. Guatemala has had military dictatorships since then, each one more repressive than the last.

"When you experience it in your own skin, having to flee, being a refugee, it gives you an understanding. We heard these stories, these real tragic horror stories, that I'm sure to most North Americans seem unbelievable. If I hadn't been right there, I probably wouldn't have believed them either. One story turns into the next: 'The army came and killed; the army came and burned our crops, our animals, and our people.' I saw poor Guatemalan Indians who had no more than they could carry on their backs, who fled to save their lives.

"I came back to the U.S. in 1982. I went to visit my parents who had retired to Arizona. It was a shock to read in the newspapers a different version of what was happening in Central America: the talk about Communists, all sorts of things that just didn't jibe with my experiences.

"I got sick. The doctor suggested I stay longer before I returned to Central America. I became involved with the Valley Religious Task Force on Central America. I started finding refugees. The first Guatemalans I found needed mattresses; they didn't have enough food; a woman needed medical attention. . . .

"There was a rumor that Indians from Guatemala had settled in the desert in Arizona and needed a lot of help. We went and talked to them. It was then that I learned about sanctuary . . . that the government considered what we were doing illegal. I didn't know that in the beginning. I was at a new passage: was I going to continue? That's when I got involved.

"I was assigned to my ministry as a church worker by the School Sisters of St. Francis, which was, as Matthew 25 says: 'To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to welcome the strangers.' I think it's a sad day when our government tells us which strangers we can welcome and which we should turn away. Do we ask people in need of help: 'What is the color of your skin, what is your political origin, do you have a green card?'

"The refugees who choose a public sanctuary [living openly in churches] are willing to take further risk because they cannot forget those hiding in the mountains of Guatemala, those in the UN camps in Honduras, those in the church camps in San Salvador. That was my own experience; I could not forget. I needed to help others to speak, to voice the truth.

"People say we're 'Communist dupes,' or 'naive nuns,' who don't really know what's going on. But Representative John McCain from Arizona can spend three or six days in El Salvador and be an expert. What he's probably done is go from the State Department to the Pan American Hotel to the U.S. Embassy. But *we're* not credible! We worked there — we lived with the people and saw it from the perspective of the ordinary people.

"We have always said that if a jury of the American public could hear the entire case — what's happening in Guatemala and El Salvador, what these people were fleeing from, the relevance of international law, what the 1980 Refugee Act really says, the futility of applying for asylum by Central Americans, our own religious motivation — there's no way they would convict us. Rather, they would exonerate us for having acted on the best principles on which this country was founded."

STEVE WATROUS

(Steven Watrous is director of the Central America Resource Center and co-founder of the Milwaukee Central America Solidarity Coalition.)

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navaca, Mexico, where a thousand children reside.

It had rained heavily the night before. As the two priests were returning home, they picked up four boys; each had the same story; they were abandoned children left out on the streets.

Because Nicaragua and Honduras share both a border and border wars between *contras* and Sandinistas, we felt there would be a tremendous need to help orphans from the war in addition to the 100,000 orphans who are already in Honduras. The lead story of the local newspaper that day had confirmed my fears.

Father Wasson and Reinhart Kohler, the co-director of the temporary orphanage in Tegucigalpa, spoke of the potential of these abandoned orphans. Father Wasson recalled the number of orphans from his Mexican Center who have become doctors, lawyers, and contributing citizens. His eyes filled with tears. His philosophy is simple. No child will ever be asked to leave, no matter how crippled physically or emotionally. I asked the co-director, Mr. Kohler, about his future. "Aren't you going to marry?" "I was romantically involved with a girl I met at college," he said, "but that is on hold. The new orphanage comes first. These kids need me."

THAT AFTERNOON we took a half-hour ride outside of Tegucigalpa to see the spot for the new orphanage. As we entered the 2000-plus acres of land bought by a benefactor, Father Frechette, its director, pointed out a small shack on the grounds. A woman with nine children had fled Nicaragua and was trying to make a living. She took in wash for the soldiers at a nearby Honduran training camp. Unfortunately, often she was not paid. Recently, she had to leave home to try to get help for one of her children who had had a fever for two weeks. A daughter stood in for her. She was a beautiful fifteen-year-old girl living with her brothers and sisters for seven years in a shack without electricity, water, or sanitary conditions. She had no skirt but only a towel to cover her ripped slip. Her brothers and sisters were mesmerized by our camera.

As we prepared to go further into the property, I couldn't help thinking I would never again see those children orphaned by the war in Nicaragua. My need to help surfaced. I said, "Here is something for yourself and family." Her look of gratitude was worth a thousand times the gift I gave her.

We journeyed into the property for about ten minutes. The road had been carved out of the woods by hand. We finally came to the spot where the first cottage was to be built. The foundation was there. A young boy was guarding the tools.

As Father Frechette and I talked, we looked at the beautiful scenery surrounding the site of this community of Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (Our Little Children). Frechette spoke proudly of the accomplishments of the people interested in helping. Thinking of his dream of cottages, schools, and infirmaries for one thousand orphans, I asked, "Where will the money come from?"

"God only knows. The need is so great. We cannot allow one more child to be abandoned."

Our final day was spent traveling to a refugee camp filled

with 2800 people from the war in Nicaragua. I really didn't know why I came. I guess I was curious about the war and how it was going. Once I got there my curiosity turned into concern. Some of the people had lived in this sparse, dull-looking camp for over three years. One person asked me for a pencil. They had no books or writing material. All they did was exist from day to day. Another asked me for a Bible. Yet another said, "Please send us teachers. We have already wasted a year." There were scores of children surrounding us as we tried to interview the refugees.

I had an instant camera. Suddenly, I was surrounded by boys asking for pictures of themselves for legal purposes. Mothers were asking for pictures of themselves and their children. It slowly dawned on me: there was no mirror among them. There was no river to see their reflection and no window in their huts. Imagine not looking in a mirror for a year.

They all told heartbreaking stories. One mother had lost her husband who fought for the *contras*. Another had lost her husband who was fighting in the Sandinista army. Many young men complained they had been given a gun without any training. Many had left their country to avoid a war they did not believe in.

My first visit to the refugee camp left me with two impressions. The first was of the suffocating boredom that must afflict those who can do nothing but exist from handout to handout. The second and unforgettable impression was left by a three-year-old child who would not let go of my hand. His eyes were saying, "I'm dying. Please help me!"

Many of the children had at least one parent in the camp. Yet, they were all orphaned by the war. They had lost their land, their security. Some, of course, had lost their parents. We didn't go to another refugee camp, because we had a plane to catch. They told me how they were building another airfield in Honduras. As I listened I kept asking myself how many orphanages, cribs, pencils, and mirrors could be purchased with the money we are spending on that airfield — a field for military purposes.

Just before I boarded the plane, a crippled man approached me and said, "Can I draw your portrait for three dollars?" Seats hadn't been assigned, and I wanted to get a good one. But I couldn't go. I sat there and let him draw my portrait. I will keep it to remind me of Honduras, and of its lost children, and of the hope that Juanita will find a crib and Jorge will get a mirror and Father Frechette will get bricks for his orphanage.

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Screen

IRONIC VARIATIONS

'HARVEST' & 'LAUNDRETTE'

ANGRY HARVEST is an exceptional film — tart, tough, and tautly directed by the Polish film-maker Agnieszka Holland, a student of Andrei Wajda. The tale concerns Leon Wolny (Armin Mueller Stahl), a Silesian farmer who shelters a Jewish woman from Vienna who has escaped from an Auschwitz-bound transport. Filmed in West Germany, it resembles the works of Kristoff Janussi and Margaret von Trotta, other young Central European directors whose gift for sifting through the history of the Second World War always raises uncomfortable questions of complicity with evil. Like them, Holland doesn't focus on a Nazi or a Nazi sympathizer, but on someone caught in the middle whose impulses enormously complicate reactions to the pressures of the times. Moreover, she does their often rickety plot structures one better by concentrating almost all the action in one place, Leon's basement, where he shelters the fugitive Rosa (Elisabeth Trissenar).

The tale is richly ambiguous. Leon is a devout, sexually timid, unhandsome bachelor. Once a candidate for priesthood, he had taken over the family after his father died and his brother was arrested by the Nazis. Indeed, with nice subtlety, Holland suggests that his original charity was no more than literally behaving toward Rosa like "his brother's keeper." When he first finds her delirious with illness in the woods and takes her to his house, he chastely tries to get her to change her wet clothing for some old clothes of his brother. The use of garments to symbolize identity is an old device, but here it's enriched by the denial of any sensuality: to him, Rosa is no more than a human being in need. It's a subtle way of conveying exactly "what a good man Leon is," a phrase that runs like a refrain through the early part of the film. Leon can report only petty sins at confession; he won't traffic in Jewish property; he is admired by everyone — most of all by his secret fugitive for whom he prepares home remedies and hot milk.

Alas, as she gets better she also looks better to Leon, and provokes appetites long suppressed under his "goodness." Without the least effort on her part, Rosa's dark slim beauty provokes him to sexual daring he would never have attempted with normal women of his milieu, driving him to both literal and figurative intoxication on drink and sex. After a certain point, he is as much jailer as savior, refusing to allow Rosa to leave and even hiding evidence that her husband also escaped from the transport. He tries to convert her to Christianity so he can marry her after the war, but still cannot refrain from raping her over the kitchen table and insulting the other persecuted Jews as "rabble." One terrible scene when they cook a goose registers just how much, beneath his benign domestic intentions, Leon has become his appetites.

Holland's directing miracle is that *Angry Harvest* is no simple tale of ironic inversion. While Leon's degeneration is disgusting, Holland links it inseparably to his basic human need to fulfill himself. Moreover, the director makes clear that Leon never entirely loses his original kindness in responding to Rosa, and is even prompted by her to help other fugitives, including the daughter of a local Jewish merchant who belongs to the partisan resistance (the kind that former Israeli Prime Minister Begin, whose family died in the Holocaust, served with during the war). The film ends with a letter the daughter writes to him after the war from America, a letter that thanks him for the "goodness" of his deeds. Holland thus provides a rich, complicated portrait of humanity's flaws and strengths. It's a harsh film, but a human one.

MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE is this year's candidate for the overpraised foreign film, the kind of slight offbeat work that jaded critics and viewers worship because of its "differences." The film is often called "refreshing," which is synonymous these days with underproduced, elliptically structured, and often vulgar and amoral. To be sure, *My Beautiful Laundrette* has appealing subject matter, the culture clash between lower-class English youths and Pakistani immigrants in South London, deftly complicated by a clash among the immigrants themselves. It also contains one of the most intriguing sets in recent film, the laundrette of the title that one of the immigrants redecorates in imaginative fashion. Sadly, however, the movie is all dressed up with nowhere to go.

The basic irony of *My Beautiful Laundrette* involves the success that some Pakistanis have in British business. At the center is one Nasser, a small businessman who owns garages and other varied commercial holdings, worships Margaret Thatcher and the opportunities that capitalism offers, and at one point roundly declares in stentorian Victorian tones, "I believe in England." The role is played with fine mischief by Saeed Jeffrey, an Indian actor whose round face conveys both intelligence and drollery, a perfect setup for a likable villain. His casting is ironic in film history: he usually appears in American theaters as a supporting actor for whites in tales of the late Empire on the subcontinent (i.e. in Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King* or Forster's *A Passage to India*). As Nasser, however, he is as liberated from neocolonial shackles as the character he plays. One fine scene shows him evicting impoverished squatters from some tenements he owns; when told that it looks bad and might lead to hatred of other Eastern immigrants, he retorts surely, "But I'm not a professional Pakistani. I'm a professional businessman."

Nasser is at odds not just with the English poor but his own past, represented by an ex-journalist and socialist brother (Roshan Seth), who once hoped for a better world, not simply a piece of this one. Broken and alcoholic, the brother appeals for Nasser to help his son Omar (Gordon Warnecke) with a summer job. Ironically, the nephew takes such inspiration at Nasser's speeches he decides to outdo him. Begging for man-

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agement of a laundry, the nephew steals some drugs, resells them, refurbishes his business under the cheeky name of "Powders," and then outfits it not just with new machines, but with fish tanks, video games, and conceptual art.

Unfortunately, the film consists mainly of these characters and this setting. The other Pakistanis are poorly drawn, especially one of Nasser's associates, a thug named Salim. Nasser's daughter Tania, a nymphette, is reduced to pouty discontent with her home and love life. Much of the dialogue and action involving both is less elliptical than murky.

But the major disappointment involves the portrayal of the English, principally a gang of punks and their leader (Daniel Day-Lewis), a childhood friend of Omar. Day-Lewis acts his role well, but despite his continual presence, the character is never fully drawn. One never knows what motivates him: old friendship, desire for escape from the Cockney ghetto, or the homosexual attraction to Omar the film makes explicit. The gang, moreover, is faceless; it seems to be kept around to provide the threat of violence, and, at the end, a predictable mini-apocalypse at "Powders." But there is no lesson to be drawn from or about their behavior.

The film may seem ironically just in this respect: the English are viewed as selectively and as shadowily as Indians and Pakistanis have been in many English films and books. But, irony aside, this leaves the film with a half-formed feel: it's an interesting view of what one might call "reverse cultural imperialism," but as artistically unsatisfying as the original. Indeed, *My Beautiful Laundrette* is only an hour and a half long, almost, literally, half a movie. It resembles the recent *Dim Sum*, another miniature study of Eastern immigrants (this time Chinese in San Francisco) making good, in which half the fun was watching "cute" Asiatics acting as bourgeois as "normal" Americans. This provides "differences," to be sure, but it's only skin deep. TOM O'BRIEN

CAROLINE BLACKWOOD & THE FALL FROM GRACE

The illusion of refuge

ROBERT JONES

OF THE MANY lies our parents tell us, the myth of the happy life is the one we seem least willing to relinquish. If we no longer have much faith in historical progress, some still hope for the individual to beat the odds and live exempt from the injustices which afflict and define the past. Despite the detours and setbacks tripping everyone around us, we want to be optimistic for ourselves and believe that life has forward motion, that where we end will be some place further away and better from where we began.

Although we pay lip service to the genius of our most depressed artists, in our hearts most of us remain failed pessimists. Hope has many manifestations, of course, and the desire to live happily ever after can be seen at its most rudimentary level as the pursuit of affluence, and at its most transcendent as belief in God. But in a certain sense, both attest to the indefatigable belief in the second chance, in our hope that somewhere lies the miracle cure, the last-minute rescue. Often there is, but often there is not. We ignore too easily the possibility of the sneak attack in the dark, the accident waiting to happen. In even the most mundane murder mystery, the family member is often the killer.

At the end of Caroline Blackwood's novel, *The Fate of Mary Rose*, a father kidnaps his daughter to save her from becoming paralyzed by her mother's terror of violence. But the child has learned to fear even her father and so flings herself from the car to escape him. As he sees the tiny body sprawled on the pavement, he thinks:

> And if the child were to survive . . . I wondered if she would ever manage to escape the demon-infested murky world of her mother, if for Mary Rose the plunge towards the tarmac would not always seem safer than life.

Our own lives are supposed to be a haven. But the refuge of the personal may be our most enduring illusion. The energy of human desire naturally seeks to protect us from the calamity, disillusion, and fear we have learned from experience. The curse is that trying to live happily, we are in constant flight from life itself.

This threat of the world outside has been the subject of Caroline Blackwood's previous novels. From the highrise apartment of *The Stepdaughter* to the Irish country house of *Great Granny Webster* to the middle-class bungalows of *The Fate of Mary Rose*, she cheerfully evokes the small terrors of the everyday and the more unwieldly evils

CORRIGAN
Caroline Blackwood
Viking, $15.95, 279 pp.

THE STEPDAUGHTER
Caroline Blackwood
Penguin Books London, 1976, 110 pp.

GREAT GRANNY WEBSTER
Caroline Blackwood
Scribners, 1977, $7.95, 135 pp.

THE FATE OF MARY ROSE
Caroline Blackwood
Summit Books, 1981, $11.95, 208 pp.

GOOD NIGHT SWEET LADIES
Caroline Blackwood
Heinemann, London, 1983, 136 pp.

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stumbling anyone who ventures from their door. If she takes as her subject particular domestic dramas, and if her characters make bunkers out of their houses and rarely leave their rooms, it is only to demonstrate how the larger world is always with us. Lived history is not an abstraction functioning independently of the individual, but the narrative line which brings together the muddle of personal crises, feuds, and betrayals that are our heritage.

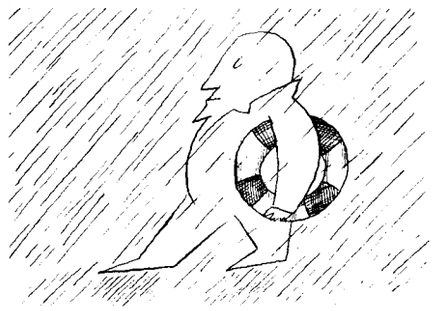
In describing Dunmartin Hall, the ancestral hall in *Great Granny Webster*, Blackwood writes:

> Dunmartin Hall always had an aura of impermanence. The house had both the melancholy and the magic of something inherently doomed by the height of its own, ancient, colonial aspirations. It was like a grey and decaying palace fortress beleaguered by invasions of hostile, natural forces.

If experience can be said to have a core, or if our place in the world has a character which defines it, we see it perpetually in the permanence of human folly. To understand the past clearly is to see that human beings are afterthoughts to creation, anxious visitors forever trying to bring reason to a universe that finds its power in chaos. The creations we force upon the world, from art and architecture to imperialist fantasies and philosophical ideas, are nothing more than tombstones which mark our passage through an inherently hostile, natural world.

This apprehension of the fragility of the human form encircled and conquered by nature is the center of the Gothic imagination. Caroline Blackwood comes from the tradition of other Irish masters of this vision, like Sheridan LeFanu and Bram Stoker, in her acceptance of evil as the foundation of the universe and primal fright in human souls as the energy at the beginning of all experience. The terror in the Gothic vision emerges from the awareness of our irrevocable separation from nature and helplessness as its victims. It is to this fact that experience continually returns and which exists as our natural, worldly inheritance.

In this almost primitive understanding of the mysteries of dread and the menace invading every moment of our lives, Blackwood is unnervingly anti-modern. Blackwood is rare among contemporary writers in that there are no elegies to loss in her work. If there is no indication of the betrayals common to the modern age's fall from grace, it is because the focus of her sight exists outside the history and locates the sinister in the world itself. And if her work is often chillingly comic and free of the beleaguered anguish we are used to hearing from our



darkest writers, it is because nihilists are slow learners who have come late to the point. Their despair is always after-the-fact, the result of having once had hope and found it abolished by the capriciousness and malevolence of reality. The Gothic imagination continues to haunt us because it accepts doom and recognizes the world as it is and has always been. There is no exile from paradise in this vision, but an ever present horror into which each of us must awaken.

In the unrelenting integrity of her vision, Blackwood is most like Samuel Beckett. But there is a passivity in the face of nothingness in Beckett's work that is absent in her novels. To Blackwood seeing the nothing that is there is not the culmination of a vision, as with Beckett, but the originating word that has echoed since prehistory and which undercuts all human behavior. It is also, for her, the moment by which we come to consciousness.

In a letter from his cell in Reading Gaol, Oscar Wilde wrote of the perspective of the world seen from the bars of his window:

> Prison life makes one see people and life as they are, that is why it turns one to stone. It is the people outside who are deceived by the illusion of life in constant motion. They revolve with life and contribute to its unreality. We who are immobile both see and know.

The houses in Caroline Blackwood's fiction have a truth similar to Wilde's prison. Always the danger lies in stopping, in seeing existence freed of the vibrancy and distractions which hold us to our usual course. It is these revelations of immobility which reveal the self's movement as a paralysis of spirit and the reality outside it as a hallucination. The mystery is how we reintegrate ourselves into the casual order of life after these moments of doubt which strike the mind with the power of the truest enlightenment. For this is the impasse which holds most ordinary lives in suspension and in fear. But within this scope, within the delusions we mistake as reality and the bad faith we mistake as love, Caroline Blackwood's novels examine the possibilities of movement left to us, and whether it is conceivable to move one step forward without setting off another bomb.

In Blackwood's new novel, *Corrigan*, Devina Blunt has lived as a recluse all the years since her husband's death. Mrs. Blunt is like Blackwood's character in her short story, "Angelica," who haunts the graveyard where her husband is buried and imagines that "all around her, the dead were lying there in the mud, waiting to be alive again." In Devina Blunt and Angelica, Blackwood captures the sense of the mind's conquering of time, of how the limbo of grief reduces the present to a vigil over the past. So the life of memory becomes ongoing existence.

Her daughter rails against Devina's passivity and refusal to reenter society. But Devina refuses to yield to the present until it becomes more compelling than the past. So until she first hears the sounds of Corrigan's wheelchair rattling up the stones of her drive, she is content to wander about her property talking to her dead husband, as she waits for something miraculous to happen. Corrigan, with his crippled legs, silken compassion, and repertoire of dreadful

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metaphors, is the miracle who returns Devina Blunt to the world.

When Corrigan arrives to sell a lapful of little white flags to raise money for St. Crispins, the hospital that saved his life, Devina is overwhelmed by Corrigan's apparent selflessness and desire to do good in the world. He speaks to her of the loneliness of the infirm and his dream to raise money to build a library to repay St. Crispins's kindness. "At the beginning, just after my accident," Corrigan tells her, "all I really craved were the poppies of oblivion. But they made me realize that I shouldn't see myself as ashes where once I had been fire."

Corrigan speaks throughout with the emotionalism of an inferior poet who believes fervently in his own genius and weeps at the depths of his feelings. But it is just the kind of exuberant sentimentality that can intimidate those with more subdued passions. Corrigan's tireless optimism convinces Devina of the aimlessness of her life. She comes to believe that if she succumbs to Corrigan's dream she, too, might save her soul from ruin.

Corrigan possesses the confidence of all little-league gurus who know how to strike most directly at the isolated heart. And his manipulation of Devina flourishes beyond his most extravagant hopes. She develops the singlemindedness of the convert who discovers a cause greater than the self. Devina decides to put her acreage to work to produce fruits and vegetables for the patients of St. Crispins. And as the farm project expands, Devina rebuilds her drawing room into sleeping quarters for Corrigan and disfigures her entranceway with a ramp for his chair. But just as Corrigan appears to have infiltrated every aspect of her life and diminished her ties to her family, Devina is found dead in her room.

If the novel followed the predictable course of stories of this kind, Corrigan would be held responsible for Devina's death. And indeed, as Mrs. Blunt's daughter investigates Corrigan's past to prove his guilt, she discovers what the reader has suspected from the beginning: that St. Crispins is a seedy pancake house, not a hospital, and that Corrigan's paralysis is as fraudulent as his dreams. She also learns that none of this would have been news to her mother. The mystery of *Corrigan* is not how Devina Blunt dies, but why she transformed her life to accommodate someone she knew was a fake.

After he had become part of the household, Corrigan spoke with his customary pretentiousness of Pascal:

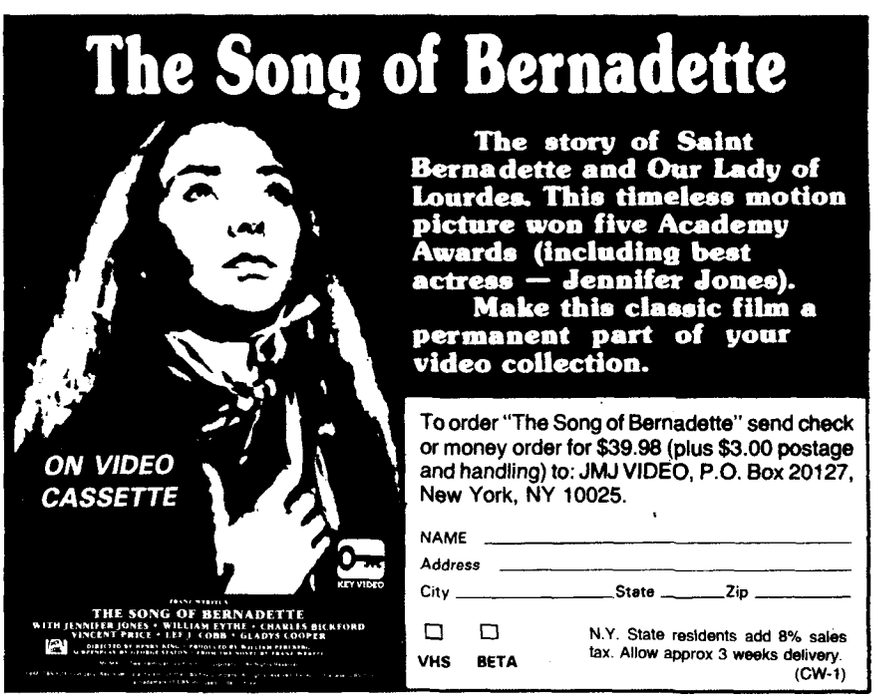
> "Maybe I identify with him because he, too, had an unenviable physique. When he wrote *'Notre nature est dans le mouvement,'* it is proof that he transcended his afflictions. Finish the sentence for me, Devina."
>
> *" 'Le repos entier est la mort,' "* Mrs. Blunt recited bashfully.

In Devina's return to vitality, Blackwood inverts Pascal's understanding of human nature existing within movement, and questions what it means to move about the world when it has no purpose. In so doing, she reveals a truth on the other side of hope: one which affirms the emptiness of life without thereby surrendering to that inertia which is death to the spirit. The issue central to *Corrigan* is how, then, do we act in the face of such hopelessness.

But Blackwood does not mean hopeless in the sense with which we are most familiar. It is not synonymous with the paralysis of despair. To be without hope in her sense is to discover in oneself the immobility Wilde speaks of in his letter from prison, a way of being or seeing that reveals our place in the world with the truest calm. It is absolutely opposed to the passivity that cripples the unloved Renata in *The Stepdaughter* or the weakling Mary Rose. Their helplessness allows them to be trampled and conquered, easy victims waiting for the "undesirable accident" that forever alters their lives.

Blackwood's novels unsettle us because she gives us the world as we suspect it exists in our most secret moments. She removes our usual recourse to consolation and security by quietly suggesting that there is nothing beyond the life into which we are born. In this isolation, we see ourselves like the people abandoned outside Wilde's prison, scrambling to find antidotes to the frailty and treachery that are the character of human experience.

To say that no resolution exists should come as no surprise, but even now we resist such matter-of-fact statements of our ill-fated purpose. It is a natural, protective response to dismiss such a view as pessimistic, but to do so evades the complexity of the issues Blackwood raises. There is a modesty in her acceptance of the insignificance of the human form that goes beyond any simplistic ideas of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negativity. She makes us aware again of how dangerous the world is and of the impossible value we place on experience. In this light, our efforts to translate the ambiguity we know into the certainty we desire seem desperate in their intention.

Through Devina's knowing nod to Corrigan's paralysis, Blackwood implies that all transcendence is false transcendence. But we sustain the illusion of flight, even if it amounts to little in the end. In spite of himself, Corrigan leads Devina to the simple wisdom to say, "I have been fooled by none of this," and to go forward anyway until she decides she's had enough.

As he looked to the past before his death, Kafka wrote in his journal: "When considering the hopes I had formed for life, the one which appeared the most important was the desire to acquire a way of seeing . . . in which life would keep its heavy moments of rise and fall, but would at the same time be recognized, and with no less admirable clarity, as a nothing, a dream, a drifting state." The mobility that Blackwood imagines is just such a truce with existence: to find the elusive balance between the dazzle of nothing and the misbelief that our lives measurably touch the world.

Books: THOSE FEET OF CLAY

THE DIARIES OF SOPHIA TOLSTOY
Translated by Cathy Porter
Random House, $35, 1043 pp.

TOLSTOY'S DIARIES
Edited and translated by R.F. Christian
(two volumes)
Scribners, $60, 755 pp.

Martin Green

IT would be hopeless to attempt an account of all that is discussed in these thousands of pages, much more a judgment on them. What I will offer instead are some thoughts on the thorniest problem they raise: Tolstoy's attitude toward women.

Since I have given Tolstoy a major role in my life as moral teacher and religious philosopher, it is painful to have to acknowledge — as these days one is often forced to acknowledge — that he was also a male chauvinist pig. Nevertheless, that is what he was. (Of course, he was also wonderfully sensitive to women, and to feminine points of view, in his novels; but such separate and equal aspects of his mind cannot obliterate that first profile— we cannot turn to those other sides of Tolstoy till we have faced this one.) And this is what comes out in his diaries and his wife's diaries; because it came out in their long and bitter conflicts. The translator of Sophia Tolstoy's diaries is — understandably — bursting with indignation about that, and the translator of Tolstoy's is clearly embarrassed.

What kind of things did he say? "A woman can be free only if she is a Christian. An emancipated woman who is not a Christian is a wild beast. [And] . . . The most intelligent woman is less intelligent than the most stupid man." As you see, these are not very interesting judgments, quite apart from their distastefulness. They don't bear the authority which so much of Tolstoy's thinking does. These are in fact the ordinary detritus or spent ammunition of the sex war — the doxa generated in a smoking room or locker-room society when "men" share their thoughts about "women." I am going to face this ugly aspect of Tolstoy, not with any hope of making it disappear, but simply of explaining it; that is, of linking it with other sides of his personality and situation.

The question obviously arises, why does Tolstoy allow himself (over many years, and in the semi-public situation of his diaries) to play such an unflattering and vulgar role? This is doubly puzzling because he could so well play, in his fiction, that very different role which won him the reverence of readers all over the world, and especially women readers. No prizes were being handed out, in the world of readers, for opinions like those quoted above.

Part of the answer lies in the novel genre, which had, as Tolstoy knew it, a strong though implicit ideological character. There are many varieties of prose fiction, but the kind that Tolstoy first read and wrote began with Richardson in England and Rousseau in France, and it spoke the language of feeling. That is, it created in its readers' minds a structure of sentiments and consciousness more elaborate and extensive than they had known before; an ideology centered around marriage and around women. The choice of the right spouse came to seem the most important act in the world, for both men and women; the right spouse was another moral world, facing and in some sense mirroring your own, and the images that mirrored to and fro between the two were life itself. After marriage one entered — in novels — a paradisal private life, on a country estate, with many children and dependents, where one spent one's time in education, philanthropy, and — this was often only implicit — the production and consumption of art. And this was the life Tolstoy led between 1864 and 1881, the years of his happiness in marriage and his writing of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* — and he knew its relation to novels.

Tolstoy was introduced to this world of feeling by books and by his Aunt Toinette, who brought him up, and who wrote him, while he was a young man, some quite remarkable love letters in the Rousseau style. His first fictional project was to write her life-story; and it forms a part of *War and Peace*. But Tolstoy's own experience of "love" and of life in general was by no means confined to his relations with Aunt Toinette. He was also a dandy, a gambler, a whoremonger, and the seigneur of a hereditary estate. In these capacities he and his brothers met many other varieties of "love." His

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brother Sergei, for instance, was quite ironic about the tender letters that passed between Tolstoy and the older woman. Sergei's was a worldly and aristocratic mind — closer to Lovelace than to Clarissa — and Tolstoy greatly admired it. Thus his relation to "novels," including his own, was always ambivalent. He could read, or write, a tender love scene, and the next day cynically mock it.

The novel genre belonged primarily to the rising middle class of Europe, and was allied to all sorts of liberal ideas. Tolstoy believed in those ideas, but he also believed in other and opposite ones. His *experience* was in some ways opposite. Who would guess, reading *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, that the author owned a serf who attended him personally, from boyhood on, and whom he sent to the army barracks to be flogged, on occasion? That is why Tolstoy, later in life, repudiated *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth* as insincere. He had written it out of his liberal imagination, while much of his behavior was that of traditional Russian *barin*.

His wife, Sophia, fell in love with him through reading *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, and learned the joys of feeling from it. She grieved over the passing of her own youth while she was still adolescent. Thus her husband's experience of women, and of her in particular, was tainted by his own insincerity. He knew, in some sense, how the trick was turned — how those intimate feelings were aroused — and he never wholly believed in them. (Tolstoy looked like his grandfather Volkonsky, who in his turn reminded people of Voltaire; in his novels, Tolstoy portrayed himself as a sort of Rousseau, but other people saw him as Voltaire.)

This has something to do with the special position of Russia within Europe. Russians felt that their culture was half European; the other half they sometimes called barbarian, sometimes Asiatic. The liberal ideas of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, France, and Germany, and the literary forms that carried those ideas, came in from the West, while the life of the Russian peasants went on much as before, in another rhythm. But different parts of the educated classes reacted differently to those ideas.

The state in its official identity, the Tsardom and its bureaucracy, tried to import the technology of the West — and its techniques of organization and discipline — without its liberal ideology. Contrariwise, the cultured part of the aristocracy, like the Tolstoys, absorbed that liberal ideology though they remained aware of the counter truths embodied in their class and family traditions and the peasants they employed. They could perhaps be said to be 75 percent Europeanized. While the professional middle classes, to which Sophia Tolstoy's parents belonged, were almost 100 percent Europeanized. Politically they could be, as Sophia was, quite conservative; culturally they were much closer to people in Western Europe than to the Russian peasants.

In this way, too, therefore, Tolstoy stood astride a crack in the earth, separating Russia from Europe, and past from future. He saw the cultural aspirations of women like his wife from inside, or alongside, but he also saw them from a distance, in irony and opposition. He swung from one position to another, and the violence of his opinions derived from their character as reactions.

Tolstoy's temperament, moreover, was reactive and divided by nature; that is, more so than his brothers'. He was known as a cry-baby in childhood, be-

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cause of his proneness to tears; but he was prone to all the emotions, and felt them in bodily terms — sweats, headaches, flushes, pulse-beats. He was a creature of enthusiasms, and found his stable identity only in a constant change of identity. This sense of self, too, he learned from novels, notably from Rousseau. In early and even middle manhood he subjected himself to older friends, quite unlike each other and unlike himself; for instance, his brother Sergei, a melancholy cynic, Boris Chicherin, a liberal ideologue, and Afanasy Fet, a political conservative and lyric poet. He played the role of rash enthusiast vis à vis each of them, as Pierre and Levin do in his novels. And, of course, he reacted against each of them in time.

This temperament was ideally suited to a novelist's work, and it made Tolstoy one of the world's greatest. He was able to be each character in turn, to see the world wholly from each point of view, and to interconnect them in a plot. The hegemony of these values shifted, but — because he was writing novels — women and their values were usually dominant. But Tolstoy was never really content to resolve his ambivalences by the means of art. He needed, sooner or later, to choose one of these points of view and commit his energies to it. (This is what Isaiah Berlin means by saying that Tolstoy was a fox who wanted to be a hedgehog.)

He had to wrench himself free from art in order to pursue truth; he became a moralist instead of a novelist. And unfortunately the temperament which served him so well in the former role served him badly in the latter. His reactions against his own enthusiasms expressed themselves as crude and vulgar prejudice — as we see in his remarks about women. And to this we must add the life-and-death struggle between him and his wife, which in some sense demanded strong feelings from him, in the name of sincerity.

This is as far — I think — as a defense of Tolstoy can be pushed. For those who intensely admire his late work, it brings a kind of absolution — a license to not take his male chauvinism seriously. Those who admire the novelist and deplore the moralist — those who like Nabokov, "long to kick the glorified soap-box from under his sandaled feet" — have to make a more complicated adjustment of their feelings. And those for whom feminism is the major moral issue must surely condemn him and read the great books only in plain wrappers.

A teacher's teacher

SOMETIMES A SHINING MOMENT: THE FOXFIRE EXPERIENCE
TWENTY YEARS TEACHING IN A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM
Eliot Wigginton
Doubleday, $19.95, 438 pp.

Raymond A. Schroth

I BEGAN reading Eliot Wigginton's *Sometimes a Shining Moment* — the story of how he turned a backwoods Georgia high school English course into an academic mini-revolution and a million-dollar institution — the same day I had tried unsuccessfully to teach Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" to fourteen college men and women in Jersey City.

Perhaps the poem and I had come from worlds too far away. An urban cemetery sits at the bottom of the block, but here no "curfew tolls the knell of parting day," no "lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea." Rather, this is a world of police sirens, honking horns, littered sidewalks, and "ghetto blasters." While I asked the class to enter the world of the poem — with its "cock's shrill clarion," and "paths of glory" that "lead but to the grave."

Maybe if I were more like Eliot. And I call him Eliot because he presents himself informally, and, unlike his "kids," I do not want to call him "Wig."

Eliot Wigginton is an educational phenomenon. Twenty years ago, fresh out of Cornell, a green, idealistic teacher at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School, to overcome the lethargy of his ninth and tenth grade classes, he asked the students to brainstorm, to come up with ideas to snap them out of it. Somehow the idea of publishing a magazine got planted (by Eliot) and it caught on. They did it!

What began as a class project became — with the help of Eliot's friends in publishing, the National Endowment for the Humanities, various foundations, and the *Whole Earth Catalogue* fad of the 1960's — *Foxfire*, a magazine of Georgia folk culture, with a budget of $450,000 a year; a series of nine best-selling *Foxfire Books*; Foxfire courses in high schools throughout the country, twenty-four log buildings, including a grist mill, in a Foxfire educational park; a *Foxfire* play starring Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy (Eliot's students had to approve the proposal to produce it); a Foxfire String Bank, and, the ultimate honor — Foxfire as the subject of a Ph.D. dissertation.

As a book, Eliot's story belongs partly in the genre of the American autobiography as success story, like Jane Addams's classic *Twenty Years at Hull House*, where a venerable person answers the question: How did you get to become the person you are today? At the same time — with its chapter-length lists of "overarching truths" about the "best teachers," and its day-by-day spelling out of his lesson plans — it fits on the inspirational/self-improvement shelf, *The Search for Excellence* for idealistic high school teachers.

Thus we have what could be three books: the history of how Eliot found himself as a teacher by engaging the energies of his students in various projects; a treatise on teaching, inspired by Eliot's rereading of John Dewey's *Experience and Education*; a practical guide on how we the readers can teach

REVIEWERS

MARTIN GREEN *teaches in the English Department at Tufts University. His books include* The Challenge of the Mahatmas, Dreams of Adventure, Dreams of Empire, *and* The Origins of Non-Violence: Tolstoy and Gandhi in Their Historical Settings (Pennsylvania State University).

FATHER RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J. *is the Will & Ariel Durant Professor of Humanities at St. Peter's College in Jersey City.*

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English Composition with Eliot's method. Ultimately, however, we can do justice to *Shining Moment* only if we go to the library and take out some *Foxfire Books* (on the same shelf with James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men)* and read some of the documentation on Georgia's lost arts — like soap making, hide tanning, ginseng gathering, butter churning, and log cabin construction — his students have compiled.

One guaranteed to stay with us is the chapter, with twelve vivid photos, on slaughtering hogs: "Now the neck was cut around the base of the head and through the throat so that the backbone was ringed completely. Then the head was twisted off and set aside to be used as explained in the recipe on p. 202. The remaining blood was allowed to drain from the carcass, and then, with a sharp butcher knife . . ." *(The Foxfire Book)*.

Meanwhile, whatever unity *Shining Moment* achieves is through its portrait of Eliot as teacher and person. And although the book's purpose is to share his method with Los Angeles and Jersey City, it's clear that much of his magic comes from the unique mix of Eliot with these twenty-four students in the Rabun County High School, the public school he moved to after eleven years at Rabun Gap, the religiously oriented, occasionally repressive, boarding school where he got his start.

Eliot's philosophy of education calls for the teacher to begin with the student's experiences, like field trips, and to train students — by spending weeks of class time on how to operate tape recorders and how to load cameras — to interview their grandparents and old neighbors about the history and lost crafts of their region — like how to boil clothes in a kettle and make a flintlock rifle.

When he can, Eliot reinforces students' positive images of themselves. To illustrate this, he tells several anecdotes, which may reveal more than he intends, about students who have wonderful afternoons working with *him* — e.g. building a log house for him to live in — but return late to school filled with the sense of accomplishment, only to be reprimanded by a houseparent for some minor infraction like missing dinner or violating what Eliot considers some unimportant point of etiquette.

Eliot will not object if I raise some questions. He tells us it really "stings" when his critics charge that his method ignores the basics; yet, he maintains that "the Emily Post propriety of "It is I" and "This is he" is stupid. He continually uses the adverb, "hopefully" to mean "I hope," and says, "I and my staff" again and again, where Emily Post and I would argue for "My staff and I." Although he mentions books used in 1967, he does not talk much about homework and getting students to read, read, read. To imply that "real world" experiences are those that take place outside the classroom is, in the long run, to slight the reality of intellectual and literary experience, of the world of Dickens, Twain, and Thoreau, which we enter by spending long solitary hours with books, and which, taught well, can have a more valid *academic* impact — and this is the primary purpose of any school — than recording cures for warts or the slaughtering of hogs.

I suspect that Eliot would answer that

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19th Annual Institute on Sacred Scripture August 3-8, 1986. Distinguished Faculty. Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP; Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ; Benedict T. Viviano, OP; Steven Davies, Ph.D. For brochure contact Sr. Noel Keller, RSM, Institute on Sacred Scripture, College Misericordia, Dallas, PA 18612. Or call (717) 675-3862.

Theology Workshop

22nd Theology Workshop, St. Mary's College, Moraga, CA 94575, June 16-20. Pheme Perkins: The Social and Moral World of St. Paul. Write: Br. Timothy McCarthy.

Biblical Institute

21st Biblical Institute, Trinity College, Burlington, VT 05401, June 15-20, 1986. Faculty: Donald Senior, Carolyn Osiek, Roland Murphy, Bruce Metzger, Reginald Fuller, Joseph Cunneen. Write: Sister Miriam Ward.

Newsletter

Computer Newsletter for Ministry. Free sample. Church Bytes, Inc. 201 W. Laflin Waukesha, WI 53186.

Staff Openings

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he teaches literature in his other courses and that this approach works with these students — perhaps even better than "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" works with mine.

Whatever Eliot would do in a Jersey City college, there is plenty of evidence in his book that he would enrich any campus with the presence of a generous, highly intelligent, intensely moral man — impatient with the dead wood in his profession; fed-up with the "cancer" of textbooks which "take over" a course and impede real teaching; pushing students, not pandering to them; convinced that certain behavior, like the selfish destruction of the environment, is clearly wrong, and determined to put the school system "at the forefront of the battle to create a more sensitive, responsive, and responsible society."

He is also humble. Eliot does not consider himself a great teacher. He invests his passion in his work, but will not "let his failures with students lead to a suicide of the spirit." Like all of us, he is grateful for that occasional warm letter from a former student. At the end of the day he goes home exhausted to his log cabin, marks today's papers to return tomorrow, then maybe goes to the local tavern with some friends. It would be an honor to buy him a beer.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 258)

we ought to hesitate to give legal and moral sanction to this reality which sooner or later, because of the great number of sperm banks, will reach American shores. PETER J. RIGA

Calling it by name

Riverdale, N.Y.

To the Editors: To those who keep abreast with contemporary thought and writing in the field of new and challenging moral and ethical issues, the name of Eileen Flynn is well known. She has written clearly on a wide spectrum of questions ranging from abortion to war. Her essays and books are characterized by an even, balanced presentation of pro and con positions.

However, in her article ["Fashioning the Wanted Child," March 14], Mrs. Flynn seems to meld AIH (Artificial Insemination by Husband) and AID (Artificial Insemination by Donor) fertilizations into one biotechnical procedure. She does point out that these two processes fall into different areas of theological acceptance, but this does not seem to be a central issue in the question of non-coital insemination.

Pace Janssens, AID should be called by its true name. It is adultery. It is a tech-

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nique of procreation which can entail no human love relationship or parental responsibility. Young vigorous males on college campuses report to sperm banks to earn a financial payment for an ejaculated deposit. What use they make of such funds is not part of my question. What parental and supportive relationships they incur toward a child conceived from their loins is. Are they any less responsible for fathering an illegitimate child than the male partner in a chance encounter with a married woman he scarcely knows? Perhaps she too wanted a baby and simply used his seed. AID can lead to a pure merchandising of human life.

For example, during a TV promotion program, beautiful talented Miss A offers to donate an ovum in return for X dollars of pledges. Superstar B will supply sperm for Y dollars, and for Z contributions, shapely Ms. C will allow her uterus to be used as a surrogate womb. Married couple D can have the baby if they fulfill a pledge for N dollars.

Why not? Louis Janssens says it may be moral.

Brother B. Albert Clark, F.S.C.
Professor, Religious Studies
Manhattan College

Pro & contras

Alexandria, Va.

To the Editors: Your editorial, "Haggling Pro & Con" [March 14], was thoughtful, factual, reasonable, objective, and informative — with one exception.

You associate yourselves with the Reagan administration's argument that the Sandinistas have moved closer to the Soviets (receiving military aid, etc.), and that the Nicaraguan government has taken some repressive measures, including the reinstatement of "emergency" powers.

However, you seem to overlook the fact that the Reagan administration has tried to do everything in its power to overthrow the Sandinistas. Is it possible that the Reagan administration has driven the Nicaraguan government into the arms of the Soviets? I think you will have to admit that the administration's efforts to defeat the Sandinistas constitute an emergency for them. And liberalization measures don't usually take place during an emergency.

Nevertheless, happily, you came to the right conclusion: that the solution lies in diplomacy and at the bargaining table.

ANTHONY J. DiSTEFANO

Ethos & revolt

Orono, Maine

To the Editors: It is striking that *Commonweal* ["Heart of the Matter" and "Haggling Pro & Con," March 14] has such contrasting assessments of the Philippine and Nicaraguan revolutions, even though both were popular revolts against brutal dictatorships.

While outcries against the rigidities and excesses of the Sandinista government have been legion, it is also true that many religious and secular observers . . . consider these repressions outside the historical situation of the Sandinista government which, since its inception, has had its very existence threatened by external sources.

In spite of this, other observers are continually amazed at the amount of openness they find in Nicaraguan society. A recent example is the report of a Maine state legislator who visited Nicaragua recently (and who was subsequently instrumental in keeping the Maine National Guard out of Honduras). She and her group were put up in an anti-Sandinista hotel and they were impressed with both the quantity and quality of criticism they heard leveled against the government. Chief among these were complaints of coffee growers about the high wages they were required to pay their workers. Others were angry that they had to attend so many meetings in order to register their vote.

Could it be that the social location of many in the church makes it easier for them to identify with the upper middle-class revolution of Mrs. Aquino than with a revolution more closely allied with the poorest classes? A journal of the caliber (and with the origins) of *Commonweal* should delve more deeply into this issue.

MARY E. HOBGOOD

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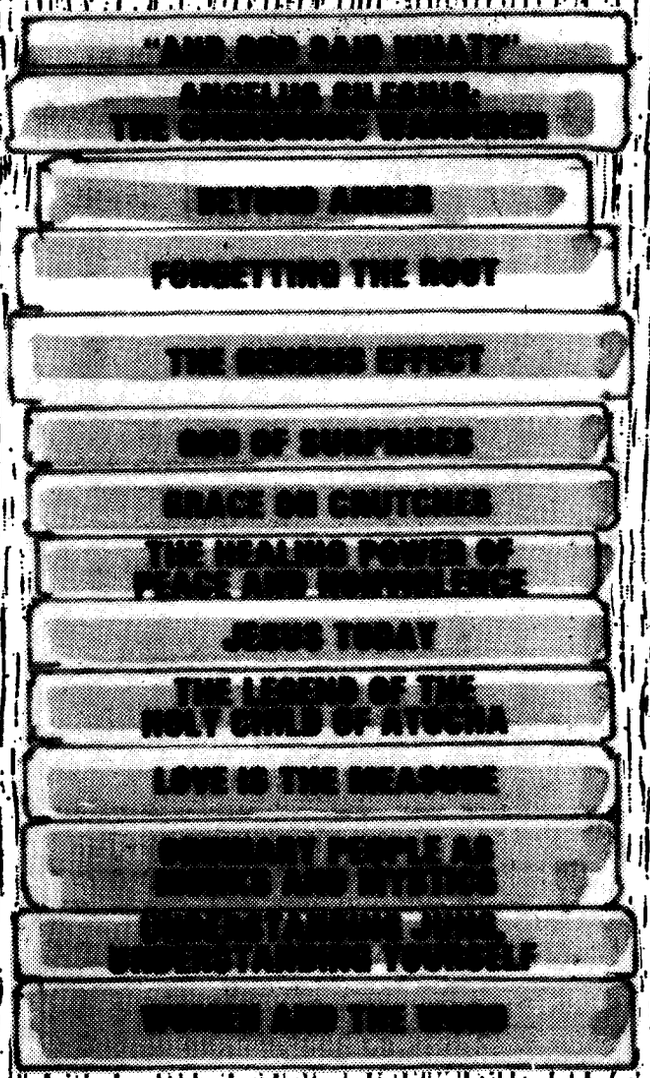

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